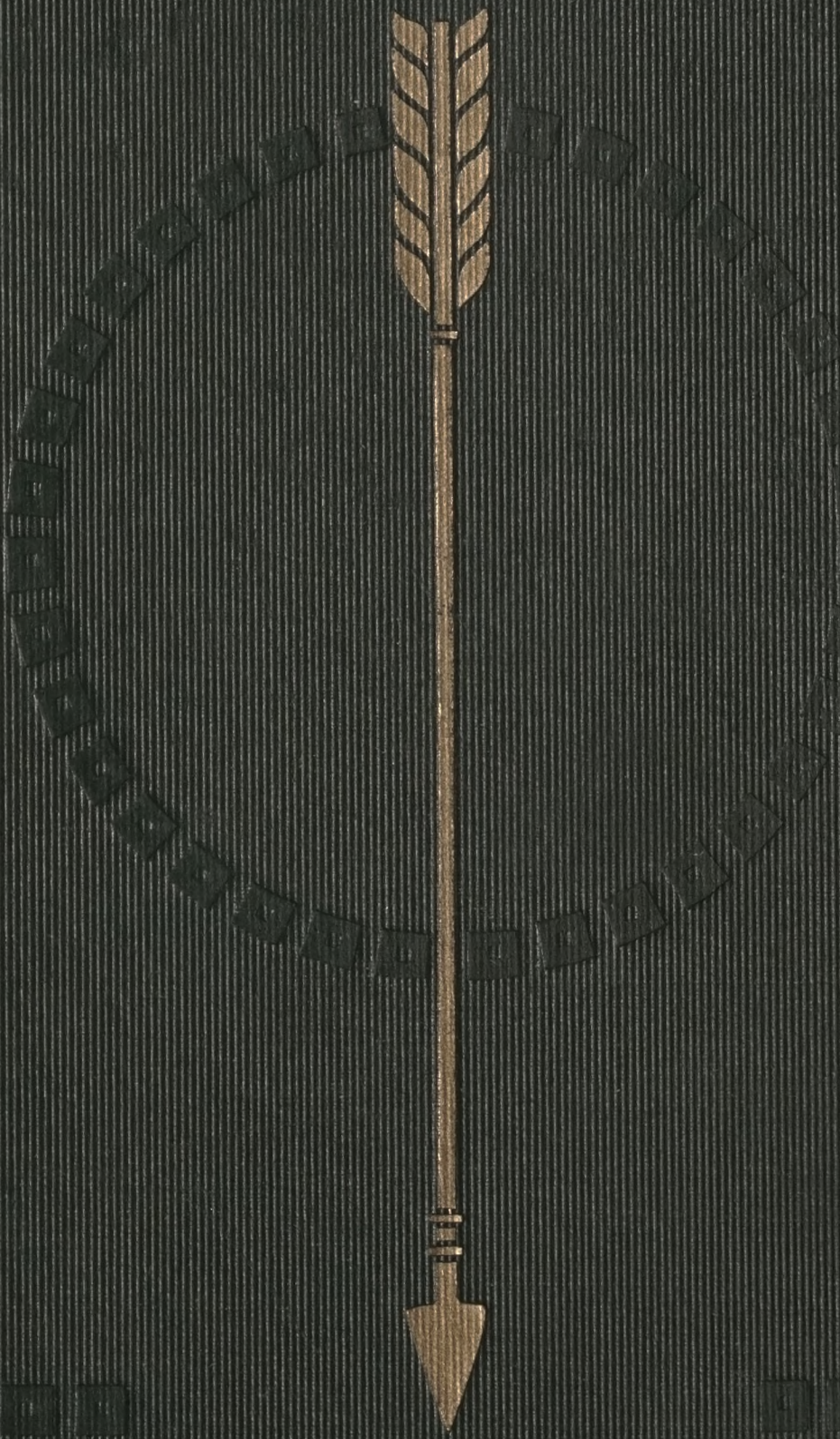
THE MASTER GIRL



ASHTON HILLIERS

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As It Happened

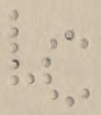
The Master-Girl

The Master-Girl

A Romance

By
Ashton Hilliers

Author of
"As It Happened," etc.



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To

MY CAVE MOTHER

Quarried from world-old dark,
  Yellow, brittle, and dry,
Labelled, gelatinised, stark
  Bare under glass they lie;
  Bone to its bone brought nigh,
Nude to general view,
Bones that of yore were—you!
  And bone of your bone am I!

The sun his course has changed,
  The sea-worm's lair is dry,
Your moon, aloof, estranged,
  Stares from an alien sky,
  Your time has long gone by,
Your mountains have rumbled down,
I dwell in a gas-lit town,
  But, bone of your bone am I.

Lords of the wild that reigned
  By fear of fang and eye,
Antlered, tusked, and maned,
  Under the ooze they lie.
  Their rivers have long run dry,
Their forests fall'n and gone,
But, the Soul that was you lives on,
  And, bone of your bone am I.

Bend from your cavern-crypt,
  Mother, a kindling eye,
Breathe thro' my manuscript
  Strength of a day long by;
  Colour, vitality,
Passion and laughter give!
Till the story's dry bones live,
  For—bone of your bone am I!

A. H.

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PROLOGUE

(WHICH WILL BE SKIPPED BY THE YOUNG AND IMPATIENT)

HE had come gently and observantly up the glen, tapping here and scratching there as he climbed, and ever and anon straightening an elderly back to deliver a small cough. Also at intervals he would turn his face to the way by which he had come to rest the plantar muscles and study the lie of the land.

Chance-led he came and unadventurously, as one might say, and with no more premonition of impending change, or of this being a White Day in his life than had you, yourself, dear Reader, when you left your breakfast table this morning.

He was a little person in the clerical wide-awake and dark tweeds of a don in vacation, elderly and grey, with heavy, lower-middle-class features

refined by expression as a sunset refines a dull street.

Something about the rounded shoulders and narrow chest bespoke the bookish man, the "scholar's slope," they used to call it. His hands were large and broad at the finger-tips; such must have done manual labour in their time, pick-and-shovel work, possibly. At the moment of his walking into this story they were—I will not say dirty, but redolent of the soil, for as he went he would still be fumbling in a roomy wallet which pulled down his shoulder, and be taking therefrom for close and loving inspection this or that shapeless fragment of stone which he would presently return to the society of its fellows.

"It never came here by accident,—there is no such thing," he murmured, conversing with himself, thought discussing matters with thought, as do the thoughts of those of us who live the single life, or cherish interests which are unshared by those with whom we associate. "We have no example from this level," he went on, turning in hand a something small and angular which he had picked up a few yards down the slope, a fragment of grey chert it was. "Three conchoidal

fractures are sufficient, when associated with such patination. Here are—six—eight minor flaws in these cutting edges, apart from the cross-fracture (patinated too). Yes, undoubtedly a used-up flake. And the thing has n't travelled half a mile from home. Where 's the flaw?"

"And to think," he went on, "that such evidence would be lost—wasted upon that young doctor-fellow. It is almost incredible, the crass ignorance of our so-called scientific men. Tried to interest him—no use. 'Out here to climb,' he says. And with lovely things like these under his feet. Amazing!"

In fact, the Professor exhibited the impatience which the man of one idea feels for the man of another, and had even the personal repulsion which a man with the Oxford manner experiences for one who begins all his sentences with "*M'yess!*"

From which disjointed self-communings the reader will have already deduced that the Professor was an ethnologist, one of that small band of heroes who during the past hundred years have quietly dug out and fitted together the buried past of the human race, pelted all the while by Ignorance and Bigotry as they delved.

The little grey Professor had come in for his share of pelting, not very recently, for his science has won her right to exist and speak her mind. Dogma, which would have burned the ethnologist some time back, and more recently did her best to starve him, has of late lifted the boycott. He is now merely glanced at with a pitying shrug and passed over when anything good is going, as "Eminent in his own line, but—peculiar," and forthwith, the good thing goes to a safe man, someone who never did anything, nor ever will. This is Dogma's way of coming round. The sons of the men who pelted us will build our sepulchres, never fear, whilst themselves making a cock-shy of some other poor devil whom their sons will canonise in turn; for the bigots, and the poor, ye have always with you.

So it had come to pass that the Professor, by dint of giving to fossil-grubbing the forty-five years of life which he might have given to money-grubbing, and of spending upon the collection and verification of tiny fragments of unpopular evidence the time which he might have spent more profitably in the delivery of sermons in St. Mary's, which would have delighted the stupid by the

"safety" of what they did n't see the bottom of, and amused the clever by the preacher's address in skating upon cat-ice, had come to know as much as was known about the Magdalenian Period.

Others worked at river-drift, Thames gravels, and the terraces north of Amiens: and other some questioned the plateau deposits for eoliths, and got but uncertain answers, as to which our Professor reserved his judgment, unconvinced, but not wishing to be found sitting in the seat of the scornful at the Last Day. Neoliths he pretended to know nothing about whilst knowing everything that had been written. It was to the men of the Madeleine Cave, the giant hunters of Mentone and their artist fellows, that he had given his life.

Now some studies can be pursued by the fireside, the mathematics of a boomerang, for instance, or why a breakfast egg, if you set it spinning vigorously upon its side will presently arise and spin upon its end. For the collation of Syriac gospels the neighbourhood of the Bodleian is as good a neighbourhood as any, but our Professor, whose fireside was within a stone's throw of the Bodleian, cared for neither mathematics nor codices; and as regards his own particular study

had long since known that to prosecute it as it should be prosecuted entailed days and weeks in clammy dark caverns long miles from anywhere, and subsequent months put in with a series of little sieves and acids and gelatine and what not, cleaning out and piecing together the uncleanly bits of brittle rubbish which eventually would constitute a New Fact and take a place in the growing chain of evidence.

"To anybody capable of weighing testimony," muttered the Professor, "this flake, which can only have been brought eighty miles up-stream by human agency, is as good evidence of Early Man at this end of the valley as if I had projected myself back a thousand centuries and seen the fellow break his tool and drop it."

He was somewhat out of breath with his climb, and moreover the going was none of the best; there was no path, and the slope was clothed with a tall growth of flowering weeds, mountain coltsfoot, and the great purple gentian, dogwood, juniper, and aconite. He replaced his hat after wiping his forehead, and, turning, parted the brush, to find himself faced by a low bluff, an outcrop of the underlying bedrock, jutting through the

rough slope of debris into which the at-one-time precipitous sides of the glen had broken down. The bluff bore a ludicrous resemblance to the countenance of some ancient person asleep and half buried in bedclothes; there aloft was a massive nose and receding rocky forehead, nearer an upper lip overhung a transverse fissure, an open mouth, nearly filled with a tongue of soapy-looking brown stalagmite resting upon a lower jaw of the same material hidden by a growth of martagon lilies. The Professor, unaware of what fate had in store for him, and, to tell the truth, expecting nothing out of the way, for a man of his years and experiences is past being sanguine, peered through the lush greenery, and saw beneath the edge of that lower lip a jumble of small broken stone loosely cemented like ill-compacted concrete into which water has percolated (which was precisely what the material was and what had befallen it).

And, peering thus, a something caught the Professor's eye. Now the Thing, whatever it might turn out to be, could not fly away, nor was its finder a callow novice that he should howk out his trove at sight and, maybe, destroy evidence in so doing, so he made himself a mental rough

sketch of its surroundings before disturbing them.

"A lot of weathering just here," he muttered. "Glen half filled up since the watershed was cut back and the stream diverted. This was a cliff once upon a time, and this was a cave. Roof fallen in and cemented down to an ancient stalagmite floor, breccia beneath, with, apparently, a layer of charcoal in it.—If you please!" this to the lilies; they did please, or at least made way for him; he was down upon his elderly knees in the moist dirt breaking away the perished flooring of the old cave with his hammer; interested, of course, for the case was exactly in his line, but still without enthusiasm, when (see how our best things approach us unsought)—the man made his great find, the chance of his lifetime came to him, such a trove as he had ceased to expect, for, despite many long vacations and snatched Easters spent in patient and systematic grubbing, the man had not been one of the successful cave-explorers. But this was his day; a plate of stalagmite came away, and the disintegrated breccia beneath it gave to his cautious and practised handling, and lo, he drew forth the whole and perfect shoulder

blade of a Cave Bear—the mighty *Ursus spelæus* himself, glazed all over back and front with a transparent film of carbonate of lime.

The relic bore abundant marks of the chert knife, a shard of which was cemented down to it; but, what raised its interest and value to the n^{th} power, and made its discoverer's heart flutter in his bosom, was the clear, boldly drawn lines of the picture with which the flat surface of the bone was etched. Here was a find indeed, a leaf from the sketch-book of a Primitive, as good as anything found by Lartet and Christy. "*De*lightful! a find at last!" exclaimed the Professor. "A contemporary picture of *Spelæus*, positively our first, I think. A bear attacking two humans, of opposite sexes apparently, but that seems unlikely. And what is this bent object in the hand of the indeterminate figure?—Weapon? But what?" screwing up his eyes. "Bent throwing-stick, Egyptian type? Boomerang?—very curious. Same object repeated in corner of picture behind bear; conceivably boomerang in flight. But as to this—er—epicene figure—I doubt its being female somehow!—and yet—" He turned to the bone. "Hey, what have we here?—This I might almost

say justifies a feminine interpretation; there appparently was a woman in the case," for adhering to the back of the scapula was a bone needle! "Rough work this, for a female," remarked the Professor, wagging his head whilst polishing his glasses, and attempting to realise the scene. "This fellow was as big as a horse; a grizzly would be considerably smaller and with inferior jaw-power. The Magdalenian type was tall, I grant you,—she might have stood six feet and an inch, but—" he wagged his head again in disapproval of a woman participating in so rough a field sport as this sketch indicated. The Professor was an old bachelor with mid-Victorian conceptions of the functions of womanhood.

"There is no getting over the charcoal—it was a cooking-place, a hearth. The design, here, implies leisure and permanent residence, and the needle a lady. This was a home, a housekeeping." He wrapped the relic in a silk handkerchief; it was more precious in his eyes than the arm of St. Mark in those of a Venetian, and at least as authentic. This done, he turned to take stock of the place, conversing gently with himself the while. "Cave more roomy at one time—hardly to be called

a cave now, possibly was never better than *un abri*, just the rock-shelter that I once spent an uncomfortable night under among the Spanish Pyrenees." He glanced up at the overhang, fringed with fern. "Calls for systematic exploration. Costly business at this height, short season and no quarters within any reasonable distance. Entails a camp, I fear. Wonder if the University would come down with a grant? *Who were these people?*" He stroked the handkerchief. "We get no nearer; a hundred thousand years is a wide gap—very. It makes the pre-dynastic Egyptian seem neighbourly. We dig, we fit together, but—they are too remote. Personally, I despair of getting to closer quarters with them in my time." He mused with half-shut, speculative eyes. "The Myers and Gurney business gives unsatisfactory results at its best, and what communications they claim to have received seem chiefly from the recently deceased. Classic idea of a *genius loci* might have had something behind it—but, *they* approached the surmise with propitiatory sacrifices, —we try the planchette—and get piffle! Other plan seems sounder, but, how to set about it? Language question a difficulty. Something might

be attempted with an Esperanto of Eskimo and Bushman roots, eh?" he smiled, "and the offering? Coarsish tastes, I conceive." In common with some two hundred millions of his fellow Europeans, the Professor had never seen a sacrifice offered. The conception, once universal, has completely passed out of our ken. That a trousered, cravatted white man should take anything which he really valued, a horse, a motor, a family heirloom, a prize pedigree ram, a cask of claret—what you will, and deliberately destroy it in public for some definite religious object, or to purchase some visible result, recompense, or immunity is unthinkable.

The Professor's mind fell back from this impermeable wall of alien thought and custom. He sighed and shifted himself as if about to rise, still muttering. "I 'd give a good deal," said he, without the faintest idea that he was really and veritably offering something to Someone, but sincere as far as he went, "for one hour's genuine confab, *séance*, communication (call it what you like), with this couple, here. What *would n't* I give?—ah, say a clear month out of my life."

He said no more for that time, in fact he stopped

short in the middle of his sentence and fell forward doubled up into a soft mass of the green stuff which he had treated with such little ceremony, nor did he fall alone; a sheet of stalactite, part of the ancient roof of the cave, had detached itself from the impending lip and fallen upon and with him.

Was it possible that the *genius loci* had taken him at his word?

Here Beginneth the Master-Girl

CHAPTER I

LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT

THE younger girls picked fast in fear of the Master-Girl's hard little hand, eating surreptitiously when her eye was off them. They made small progress, for what with the badgers and birds and the lateness of the season the whortleberries were getting thin upon the rock. The Master-Girl ran a critical eye over the steep face below them. It was blue with fruit, but dangerous, for the strata dipped and the stuff was soft. She peeped into her pupils' skin wallets and uttered words of counsel, took the biggest satchel and went over the edge. It was finger-and-toe work and loose in places; she could hear smothered giggling above her as she climbed, and knew that the youngsters were indulging, but held upon her way. The fruit she had reached was blue-black, dead-ripe, and for some reason untouched by the birds for days past. She had never tried this face before; she began to pick.

Then, all suddenly, her hands stopped, her eyes fixed, and every muscle grew tense, for from just below her feet had sounded a little faint sneeze!

Dêh-Yān was sixteen, full woman as her people counted, the biggest, strongest, and bravest of the unmarried lasses of the Little Moons. She could throw a chert-headed assegai forty strides and make it spin as it flew. She could handle a stone hatchet dexterously, skin, cut up, and roast. She could rub fire out of two sticks more quickly than any member of the tribe, could use her bone needle, and split sinew to admiration. In fact she was more than well grounded in the domestic arts then practised by woman, and hence the chief, and the head-wife of that chief, were in no hurry that this household treasure should marry out of the clan, and had set her in permanent charge over the younger children. Dêh-Yān was the First Governess.

When a modern woman is startled she shrieks, a perfectly useless expenditure of energy, and worse, for the sound and its reaction upon the system of the shrieker prevent her from hearing more; also she not uncommonly shuts both eyes to shriek the better. Dêh-Yān neither shrieked

nor shut her eyes, although thoroughly startled and indeed frightened. Now Dêh-Yān was not easily frightened; there were in fact but three or four things which she really feared, a wolf in open country, a bear or lion in any country, and a wife-hunter from beyond the ranges. This sneeze was the sneeze of a man, of a strange man in a neighbourhood and in times in which a stranger was an enemy confessed. So the girl held her breath tightly and remained perfectly rigid for a few seconds, strung for such activities of flight as might be possible under the circumstances.

Nothing happened. Her presence was plainly unsuspected. And now the woman-nature in her proved itself. That small muffled sneeze excited in her bosom a vehement curiosity. Her duty, her safety, the safety of the brats committed to her guardianship, depended upon a silent and prompt retreat, but she must needs first see this man who had sneezed.

With infinite precaution she lowered herself to a ledge a few feet beneath her, crawled, leaned, and peeped; farther and yet farther she craned for a view, and—there he was! She found herself overlooking the brow of a cave, a fissure in the

limestone, and there, at the cave's mouth, sat her enemy!

One steady, all-embracing glance assured the girl that this interloper was not of her clan, nor of its allies. The stone-axe beside him was plumed with crimson feathers, the wings of a Wall Creeper. Its owner must needs be a Sun-disc man, an enemy from the other side of the mountains, and one who was presumably hunting herself.

What should she do? Another girl would have crept stealthily away up the cliff; another girl would already have been in full flight, and would have run shrieking to camp. Then the braves would have turned out and found—nothing! and that girl would have been beaten for crying "Wolf!"

Dêh-Yān did not relish being beaten. She knew all about it; if she had to run any risks these should not include that risk. She knew herself as strong as some men and as clever as most. In her heart of hearts she was somewhat jealous of men. She would have liked enormously to be a man and a chief. Moreover she had been for some time in silent rebellion against her lot. She was well aware that by right and usage

she should have been sold in marriage any time within the past two years. An old maid was an unknown creature among her people. Savages do not appreciate the utility of old maids, any more than does our working-class to-day. Nothing but the covetousness of the Old Chief stood between this girl and a husband of one of the allied totems. She was too useful to part with at any price which her suitors could pay. Dêh-Yān knew all this; there is not much that a savage woman aged sixteen does not know which concerns herself. There is nothing which answers to false modesty in your savage. Hence Dêh-Yān was as discontented as a young person is likely to be whose future is blocked.

This girl panted for a larger life than she was enjoying. She wanted to score, but being only a woman she was never allowed an inning. She knew by fair trial that she had the legs of any young brave in her tribe; that she was a far better climber than most, and could handle a man's weapons as well as any lad of her age. Yet, when there was anything to be done with axe or assegai it was their call, while she must be stitching a kaross or gathering sticks! The unfairness of it!

And there had been no war in their country for some years, nor any chance for her to prove her capacity and courage in emergency.

Here was her chance; here, just beneath her feet. 'T was now or never; she would kill this woman-hunter and take his scalp back to camp. It would be a glorious feat, the women would be jealous, no doubt, and so might the younger men, but someone would make a song about it, and her name would be remembered. That would be something that would comfort her when after a few brief years of overwork and child-bearing she was no longer supple and swift and had shrivelled into a blear-eyed, haggard old squaw of thirty-five, bullied and bidden about by her own sons.

And it was really quite easy. As the villain sat there exactly below her he was so utterly in her hand. One smashing down-cast and her hatchet would be in his brain, and—well, it would spoil the scalp!

Was there no other way? She would peep again. He had not changed his position. From signs she could see that he had not changed it for days. His left foot fell inwards unpleasantly; it was *broken above the ankle!*

The man was starving to death! Water he did not want for a trickle oozed near him.

Then Dêh-Yān understood why the whortleberries upon that cliff face had ripened untouched.

Then the alternative occurred to her.

The custom of the country considered it sound practice that an enemy taken alive should be tortured before being eaten. The girl knew this as a matter of course, just as a modern duchess knows that a garroter is whipped and a murderer hanged by the neck, nor is broken of her sleep by the knowledge. Dêh-Yān had listened with horrified interest to the talk of old women who professed to have watched the process out, or nearly out. Immemorial custom sanctioned a woman's presence at the salutary spectacle. The girl was no more responsible for the usages and customs of her people than a St. Louis belle is responsible for lynching.

So, there remained the alternative, a dreadfully thrilling, catch-you-by-the-throat alternative, of giving this wife-hunter over to the tribe.

She played with the idea for a moment—women think quickly—then she acted, as women act, upon impulse. She would have a good look at the

wretch first, would have her fill of jibing at him, teasing him, terrifying him if that were possible. At least she would tell this outlander who had come for her (proposing, as she knew, to knock her over the head in the dusk at the dipping-hole down by the river and drag her off half-stunned to be his trophy and slave for the term of her natural life), she would tell this raider, I say, in good set terms precisely what was in store for him, and see how he took it.

She peered and dropped a pebble. He looked up, and, albeit neither knew it, her business, and his too, was done. Incidentally the fates of countless millions of humans were spun by that brief passage of eyes. The horoscopes of empires were cast then and there. There and then was delimitated the eastern frontier of old Rome, the Parthian march, which the legion was never to cross. The issue of Senlac was decided; Agincourt and Crécy were lost and won.

The seated man below leaned slowly back and turned his face up. It was the handsomest face the girl had ever seen. He was n't at all what she had fancied, not by any means a brute, but quite young and—and—nice.

"You there?" said the man, quite naturally. Dêh-Yān studying his face did not answer.

"Come down and talk to me. I shall not eat you," he smiled wearily.

The girl pouted; this was putting the moccasin upon the wrong foot. And then the bush she was holding by parted without warning. She snatched, but failed in getting hold, snatched again at sliding rock and stone, saw firmaments of constellations, and went to sleep.

A few minutes later, not more, she awoke with a wet face. Someone was dabbing her sore head with water. Who? Where? She opened her eyes. The hunter, his own head bleeding from a fallen stone, was holding a sponge of wet moss to hers.

She struggled up dizzily and sat within his reach, for the sill of the cave was narrow and the face beneath it fell steeply. There was no escape for her if he were still strong enough to strike. She thought for a moment that he had struck, for she was running red, she was sitting in a red puddle, but it was whortleberry juice. Her wallet had partially broken her fall.

"I shan't eat you," he repeated. Nature had

been pressing him to experiment. He had got so far as to finger his knife.

"Why?" she asked stupidly, thinking aloud. One of her Little Moon braves in similar circumstances would have regarded the tumble of an enemy-woman as a sheer food-gift from the God of the Hills.

"Sun-Men don't eat girls," he was saying. "Now you are well again, what will you do?"

"I—don't—know," said Dêh-Yān. He was not only very, very beautiful, but incredibly gentle; wholly, quite absolutely different from the young braves of her clan who had been making eyes at her, and whom the Old Chief had warned off—Pongu, Low-Mah, and Gow-Loo, rough, boastful fellows whom she had known and played with as boys on an equality, but who, since their midnight initiations, had seen fit to treat her as the dirt under their noble masculine feet.

"Run away, now, if you feel strong again," said the man quite gently, and seemed to mean it. "Run and fetch your braves. I am tired of sitting here." (He looked dead tired, and oh, so thin!) "They will take my scalp and eat me. You Little Moons are not nice feeders."

"They will roast you first, *alive!*" said Dêh-Yān very low, and covered her mouth with her hand, the unpleasantness of the practice coming home to her for the first time.

"Yes, I know—'t is my risk—I took it. But, unless they come quickly I shall be—dead first."

His words came slowly. He leaned back and—fainted.

Dêh-Yān looked him over as he lay and was conscious that new, and strangely pleasant, and unnamed feelings were moving within her. She no longer feared this man! He had given her a horrid fright, but that was over, and had left no after-effects—savages are insensible to what doctors call shock. Nor did she hate him as she had thought she hated all Sun-disc Men, and had been prepared to hate this one until he had turned his face up to her and spoken gently.

The girl's wallet lay where it had fallen, disgorging crushed berries, and disclosing a certain ration of jerked meat which she had brought with her for the day. An extraordinary and wholly irrational desire suddenly possessed her to capture and tame this man. He promised to be nice in another sense than the gastronomical. She really

was pitying him, but of this she was unaware, for pity was an emotion unknown to the Little Moons, who had no equivalent for the word in their speech.

Having bathed his head in her turn and brought him round, the girl fed her man with bits of meat and presently found him stronger. It was not that the food was assimilated; it would be an hour before it passed out of the stomach and was picked up and distributed, but the nerves sent word along that help had arrived and the system responded sympathetically. He looked better, more beautiful than any man had ever looked to Dêh-Yān. Besides he was her discovery, her capture. No one else, man or woman, should share her possession; he was her very own. Here came into play the sense of property, but behind it gratitude awoke, a very rare growth in palæolithic times, as rare as pity. She sat thinking, hand to mouth, her man still slowly eating, restraining his ravenousness, enjoying the food as he had never enjoyed food in his life of seventeen years or so.

What was to be done next? A shrill cry from above brought on the crisis. The children had missed her and were growing anxious: if one of

those youngsters caught a glimpse, had the faintest inkling, she would lose her treasure.

Necessity was upon her; she must act, and act decisively. Swiftly shovelling with both hands the rest of her day's food from the bottom of the wallet into the lap of the man, she whispered quick and low, "More to-morrow!" and began to re-climb the face.

The boys above saw her coming and grinned roguishly at her slow movements, and more at her empty wallet and juice-stained kilt and bleeding head. She got her breath before chasing and smacking the biggest, then marshalling her little army, she kept it hard at work until the sun dipped behind the snows and 't was time to be making for camp.

CHAPTER II

A HOUSEKEEPING

"MORE to-morrow," the Master-Girl had said, but to-morrow has a knack of taking the bit in its teeth. When Dêh-Yān looked forth at the weather very early next morning she knew that her path was blocked. Snow had fallen in the night and was still falling from clouds which were creeping down the wooded shoulders of the foot-hills after powdering their bare polls with the first fall of autumn. The nine white giants which never changed were hidden, and the horrid, bitter, frozen river of ice which came winding down from the closed valley which we call the Lap of the Gods, bearing dirt and stones upon its cracked and dirty back, was hidden too.

The Old Chief sniffed more snow in the sky and bade strike the wigwams, the summer homes of his people. 'Twas ho, for their winter quarters, the range of southward-facing limestone caverns,

a ten-fingers' march down-stream. Certain braves were sent on ahead to prospect and smoke out the hyenas which were pretty sure to have usurped possession.

Preparations began at once and the Master-Girl must make herself conspicuously useful and prominent in the flitting with whatever heart she set to it. As she worked and packed she thought hard and keenly as she had never thought before in her life. Hitherto her thoughts had been solely for her tribe, and upon topics upon which she could think aloud, but now, and for the first time, she had thoughts for someone outside the circle which had enclosed her since she could first remember, and thoughts which must most carefully be kept to herself; yes, so rigorously that she gabbled loudly as girls who work in company will when they fear the suspicion of having any private thoughts at all.

Before mid-day the march was begun, and the Master-Girl, still chatting loudly and thinking hard, must take her place on the trail, albeit with a very backward-looking heart. How was her man getting on? This cold was bad for him, he had no bison-skin robe with him. A wife-hunter's kit

is light, and no doubt the weather had been warmer when he left his people upon the other, the sunny side of the ranges. Another night of this would finish him. She had given him her word, too, and the Master-Girl was truthful, as girls went in those days, which means she did n't lie from choice, and had a natural pride in doing the thing which she had said she would do, even if it proved unexpectedly difficult.

Thus it befell that without committing herself to any specific plan the Master-Girl kept a definite end resolutely in view, even to the extent of selecting for her special burdens on the march certain articles which on another occasion she might have placed upon the back of one and another of her pupils.

The braves formed line and scouted for game ahead of the old men in the centre. The squaws and girls staggered slowly behind, bowed beneath the property of the tribe, the accumulated gettings of a summer's hunting. There were also the household stuff and the babies.

So big were the flakes that progress was difficult from the first, and presently became impossible; the smaller and more heavily laden girls could not

be kept going. It was no use beating the stragglers. The Old Chief called a halt. When young things begin to get behind, someone will presently be missing. The braves, who had come upon bears' sign, might follow it up; but a camp must be pitched for the night at any rate, and the girls must drop their burdens and go forth for firing before the snow covered all. Down went ill-secured bundles of skins, sheaves of assegais, wallets of jerked deer-meat, the miscellaneous lumber of a tribe of hunters, and out went the stick collectors; 't was then or not at all.

A little girl near the edge of the covert saw the Master-Girl bending beneath a fagot, saw her drop it and run, heard her shriek "*Bear!*" There was a headlong race through swirling flakes over and under fallen trunks and laden boughs: five minutes later the last of the runners was safe in camp. The mother-squaws were scolding, counting, cackling, but where was Dêh-Yān? The hunters must be recalled, but were far ahead running a trail. By the time they were told of what had happened, and the pack had been lifted, the snow had covered all marks, indeed a good deal of property which had been thrown down in the

confusion was temporarily lost. For the rest of the short dark day the braves cast forward up this gully and that glen, but it was upon their return that a hound scratched up from under a drift a skin wallet, stiff and red. The finder of this grim relic brought it to the Old Chief in good faith. The elder looked, sniffed, snarled, "Fool! —this is not blood, but berry-juice!" whereat Gow-Loo, a somewhat jolter-headed young savage, slunk away cursing the lost girl and wishing the bear a good meal of her. Later he cursed her more bitterly still.

A hasty camp was pitched, ill-warmed, ill-lighted. The squaws huddled amid their shuddering children, the men never laid down their arms all night. A cannibal bear was the most terrible enemy known to the tribe; a taste for human flesh once acquired, and the fear of man once overcome, there was no knowing to what lengths such a beast might go. 'T was opined to be no brown bear either, but a grizzly, or worse, a Cave Monster, one of the sort that even the lions feared, a brute that hung around the mammoth herd on its march, and occasionally cut off a calf. Nobody slept, and there was

but one topic of conversation, the fate of Dêh-Yān.

One boy, indeed, the boy whom she had spanked the day before, stuck to it that she had outrun him whilst making for camp, had passed him running silently and running wide, but none believed him, for he was not a truthful boy nor did his tale obtain a moment's credence from the fact that next morning certain assegais, axes, and skins were missing. Such losses are incidental to a panic when women and girls run, and cry out, and drop things; they would be found, if and when the snow melted. But the snow did not melt.

So, a day later, the Little Moons trailed down in close order to their winter quarters, leaving their summer camp under a robe of new snow. The fate of the First Governess added a delicious piquancy to the nightly tremors of the children whom she had whipped. The women regretted, grumbled, and speculated, without a misgiving, but a doubt remained in the mind of a certain young brave, which doubt he later imparted to a couple of his comrades, who turned it over silently in their minds.

The man with the broken leg had made a poor night of it. He had finished the jerked deer-meat and was ravenously hungry, sickeningly, dreadfully hungry, and quite desperately cold. He had been telling himself all night between the brief naps permitted him by the various pains, cramps, and gnawings which assailed him, that this girl could not return, yet all through, something within him kept the spark of hope alight. A dark, thick, long-delayed morning, with eddying flakes as big as beech-leaves, put that spark out. Such weather he knew would break up the summer camp at once. The girl, who, under other circumstances, might conceivably have paid him a single surreptitious visit, would be tied to her burden and to the line of march; every hour would lengthen the distance between them. No, it was all up. He must die—and this dying was very slow work—and abominably painful. He wished the braves of her tribe had found him. He would have shown those dirty Little Moons how a Sun-disc man could stand fire. Ugh!—he was a fool to have given the creature a second thought—a mere Little Moon woman, useful perhaps when properly trained, but one of a backward tribe that

ate snake (think, snake!) and plumed their axes with owls' feathers.

The contempt and hatred felt by a savage for a man of another totem and habits is almost inconceivably bitter, nearly as fierce and irrational as the loathing entertained by an Orangeman for a Papist, or a Wee Free for a United.

So the broken-legged man sat and shuddered, involuntarily, for he was true to stock, and made no more moan about his condition and prospects than does a trapped wolf. He had gone over his chances and appraised and laid the last of them down—worthless! But there was one which he had given not a thought to—the ardent strength of a woman's first passion.

"*Man, I am come.*"

His dim eyes opened very slowly. 'Twas no dream; she was there, dark bronze-red with exertion, and exhaling warmth. She was burdened, too; he marvelled dully how she had got such a bundle down that rock-face. A bison-robe was drawn under him, another laid over him; he was fed again, and again he revived, but more slowly, for this time he was far gone with cold and exhaustion. He had not spoken. She was gone.

He wondered. Then the mouth of the cave was darkened once more, and she was back with something, a small sheaf of assegais, two axes, and a dozen flake-knives. A second absence and a second return revealed her in another character, for there lay her fire-sticks, and scrapers, yes, and more skins, a housekeeping!

The man's eyes were clear by this time. "What will the Little Moons say to this?" he asked, his brown cheek bulging with food.

The girl frowned and plucked at the hair of her kilt. "I am dead. A bear got me at our first camp. Oh, I did it well! We were out for wood; the snow was falling thickly; I laid a trail of my things up a side glen, mittens, wallet, and an old kaross, then I cried '*Bear!*' and sprinted back to camp, picked up these things (none of mine—no scent for the pack.—Am I a child?—) and doubled on our trail across the open where tracks were many. If a hound opens on my line they will whip him off for running heel!—But there was no padding me after the first minute—the snow saw to that!" She grinned. "Neither spoor nor scent!—And while they are casting forward on a false line, I am here,—with you!" Her eyes

shone, her voice, hard and hunter-like at first, fell softly and almost shyly at the end.

Here again, as at their first interview, the man's intelligence followed the girl's speech laggingly. Her people and his had been separated for many generations "by mutual distrust and mountains." Intertribal trade did not exist, nor peaceful communication, but internecine wife-stealing had kept alive a common glossary. When she had passed to another subject he recalled something strange in her story: "the pack," she had said; she had referred to "a hound" ("good wolf" was her word—Pŭl Yūn knew bad wolves only). He did not interrupt his meal and her recital at the time with questions, but learned later that the Master-Girl's people, more backward than his in most respects, had recently domesticated wolf-whelps.

The man touched the skins wistfully; he hardly understood as yet.

"But a bear would not eat bison-robe and hatchets. When you go back to camp—" he began, feeling his way towards the incredible.

"I am not going back to camp," said Dêh-Yān in a whisper. "This is my camp."

The broken-legged man sucked in both lips and stared, but his eyes kindled and smiled. "It seems that I am to get my wife after all," he said softly.

The Master-Girl brought to the point—the point for which she had been scheming and working for the past day and night—was already modern woman enough to cover her mouth with her hand and shiver. After all then, she would belong to this man, not he to her; her captive had caught her, and thus soon! Well, it was to be, she had no retreat open to her, and—and—he was gloriously beautiful, and—and—so gentle! She nodded assent, her hand still over her mouth. The young people's eyes met. It meant marriage.

"It is well," said the man. "We will—live!" his eyes shone. "For a little while, perhaps. But, who knows? The Gods of your hills may be kind to us. They have been kind to us so far, and have covered my hiding-place and your tracks with the ptarmigan's feathers. Let us praise them! I do not know their names. As for the God of my tribe, She is hidden. She must wait. I will greet Her when next She shows me Her face. Meanwhile, be our time together long or short, I will sing my wedding song."

He sat as erect as he was able, and staying himself upon his palms and filling his chest, began to chant trumpet-lipped the hymn of his people, the one reserved for such occasions. Its exact terms are, perhaps fortunately, irrecoverable. It was even then of an immemorial antiquity (nothing changes more slowly than the wedding custom of a primitive people); this was an archaic survival, sanctioned by use and wont and age; there were words and idioms in it which were wholly foreign to the girl—imbedded fragments of the long-dead River-drift men's gabble, frog-like guttural cluckings of tongue and the tonsil, mingled with newer and nobler speech, vocables truly human and musical. The girl listened and panted and glowed, tingling to the tips of her toes. This was life!—Life! If, by any hap, she were tracked, caught, and dragged back to her tribe to suffer the frightful penalty reserved for a girl who so far forgot herself as to "steal her man"—as their speech had it (a phrase still used by our peasantry)—well, she would grin it out to the very last. She had lived!

How shall we picture the youngsters? Were they handsome? According to modern canons—

no. High in the cheek, narrow and low in the brow, and somewhat heavy in the jaw one fancies —strongly outlined sketches of the Race-to-Come-after. Comely enough though, in one another's eyes—oh (a detail this, but worth preserving) stalwart exceedingly—he a good seven feet in height by our measure, and the Master-Girl six feet three.

Suddenly in mid-chant the singer's eyes rolled inward, his lip was drawn up from the teeth, and he was sinking back. She caught and cherished him to warmth and comfort. He was splendidly plucky, but weak.

So passed the first day of these young people's housekeeping. The girl got some kindling in before the light went, and made fire, and watched the night out beside her sleeping patient. The First Nurse. Before dawn she recognised and prostrated herself to the crescent Moon, her Totem to whom she gave credit for her successful elopement, and to whose mercy she committed her husband and herself.

The next day he was better. Dêh-Yān found herself able to leave her new treasure. It was hard, but business is business, and the girl was as practical as she was enthusiastic.

"It has stopped. I go to hunt—for us."

"The fall is too young," he objected. "Nothing will be afoot yet—no spoor."

"You shall see," said the girl. "At least I can be getting more wood."

At the edge of the covert below the face Dêh-Yān, moving slowly and with eyes all around her, saw a something tiny and black moving upon the whiteness, the jetty tail-top of an ermine in his winter pelage. Pursing her lips she gave the shrill, small squeal of a leveret in difficulties and was presently looking into the face of the eager little robber who had raced to her lure. Her throwing stick broke his back. Dêh-Yān was not fond of stoat, no one is, but meat is meat; she cut out the gland and pouched him. Observing that his muzzle was bloody, she worked his line to heel and coming upon the hole he had just left, dug down to a family party of hedgehogs laid up for their winter sleep in beech-leaves, each as fat as butter, and only one of them sucked. Here, with economy, was meat for three days at a pinch. She returned to the cave silently pleased with herself to meet the silent approval of her man.

For the rest of the day she accumulated firewood. Her man should be warm.

At night Pŭl Yūn, as he bade her call him, groaned in sleep. By daylight his wife would examine his hurt. The limb was sufficiently wasted to show the overlapping of the bones. It was a simple fracture of the fibula and the muscle was enfeebled enough to tempt her to put into practice the woman's lore learned of the Old Chief's Head Wife.

"Hold to the rock—hard—I shall pull." He braced himself, she drew with slow power and felt the limb give, then, venting pent breath, relaxed, and heard the broken ends of the bone cluck neighbourly as they came to a renewed understanding.

"Now, lie upon your sound side, and the leg will keep its shape."

Her man took breath, for the operation had hurt him abominably, albeit he had not let the least little moan. "O woman, what talk is this? It is a moon-and-a-half of a matter before broken leg-bone knits strongly; how am I to keep it in one shape so long?—when I am sleeping, say? Wah! You are very clever, but I shall break it again before morning."

The girl thought hard, sitting at the entrance of the cave and studying the curve of the young Moon just visible, afloat in the darkening blue, her people's Totem and her own, and her favourite object among the heavenly host. "O Moon, Little Moon, teach me to medicine my man!" she murmured. "Here are not the things which we of your people use in such a case. This cave-floor is hard rock, I cannot drive little pegs to keep the limb in place, nor while this frost holds can I dig clay to make a mould to hold it firm. What shall I do for him, O Little Moon?"

And, behold it came, a thought, an expedient, bright, and wonderfully simple, and perfectly novel and practicable. Arising without a word, she fetched six straight hazel-wands, and having wound the limb carefully in a deer's hide, bound it within a cradle of splints. 'T was new practice, she had never seen or heard of such work before, nor had her man; but he let her have her way with him, for he was not only very weak and weary, but the fellow saw that he had fallen into the hands of a wise woman. We, too, are by way of recognising that here was that rare and invaluable creature, a born inventor. Such are of

altogether incalculable value to the race. And, bethink you, how seldom do they appear. Our own age, verily an age of miracles, is altogether exceptional; never in the whole course of man's history has there been such a time. Dimly one descries a period, the so-called Second Dynasty, when the Egyptian brain, then young and new and plastic, scintillated, once in a century or so, admirable inventions, the wedge, the lever, inclined plane, wheel and axle; but who invented anything since until our own day? Gunpowder and printing, the arch and steel, the mariner's compass, you 'll remind me, and what else in the course of six thousand years? Within the memory of living men if an Oxford don wanted light in haste he had recourse to flint and steel and an oil lamp. If he wished to reach London in haste a good horse was his best servant. Ramses the Great would have done no otherwise in either emergency. Most of earth's greatest men have harboured an inexplicable prejudice against inventors, the Greek philosophers, for instance; even the greatest generals in history would trust nothing that was new. Alexander, Hannibal, Marlborough conquered with the ordinary weapons of their day; Welling-

ton distrusted the rocket and preferred Brown Bess to the rifle; Napoleon (fortunately for liberty and England) sneered at inventions and had a nickname for inventors.

No, not only the practice of invention, but the very theory of it is modern: the mere idea that there is anything that *can* be discovered (without mortal sin) is of yesterday. Your ancient inventor investigated at the risk of his life, and published his invention in terror. However obvious and useful it might chance to be, if it hit a vested interest, or offended a priest, the man would be burned for having commerced with the devil.

So with the lowest savages; not the filthiest of their foods, the most objectionable of their customs or the silliest and clumsiest of their tools or weapons, but is bound up in some way with their religion, and protected from innovation by its sanctions. Did not Mumbo Jumbo give them the throwing-stick in the days before the Moon began to chase his sister the Sun? Who so presumptuous then as to suggest any improvement upon the throwing-stick, the divinely inspired throwing-stick? Let him be skinned alive and eaten, says Mumbo Jumbo, and let the best and tenderest of

his chops be the portion of me, Rum Tum, the High Priest of Mumbo Jumbo.

Thus hampered, man's intelligence moves slowly, and racial advance has not been precipitate in Korea, say, or Spain. Among the Little Moons the very possibility of inventing anything had been long forgotten. From his childhood to his death each member of the tribe moved in a web of routine, and did what he did at stated times because it was the custom of the community. There was never any change, improvement was impossible, for the corpus of the law which regulated his life and bound him hand and foot resided in the retentive memories of the oldest and most pig-headed of his people, themselves brought up in a similar environment and mentally incapable of breaking away from it in any one smallest particular.

Hence this departure from practice in the matter of treating a broken leg filled the man's bosom with wonder too deep for words. He found himself encumbered with novel feelings, feelings for which he had no suitable vocabulary. When a young brave went on a wife-hunt, it was not to be supposed that he should respect or reverence

the dejected and sulky captive whom he drove home before him. That in the course of years their mutual relations might improve, that some regard for the mother of his sons, some admiration even for her capacity and judgment might arise was possible, but at the first her lot was a sorry one; she stood for the proof of her captor's strength, courage, and address; his slave, no more.

But Dêh-Yān stood for nothing of the kind. And what she did stand for Pŭl Yūn was at a loss to explain to himself. Having nothing to do, he watched her about the cave and marvelled at her —also at himself and at something which was going on inside him.

And in her, though he did not know it. The first passage of their eyes had begun it, but much had happened since. She had touched him. She had handled, lifted, supported him—given him exquisite pain (as she knew by intuition), fed him, rubbed his cold stiff limbs back to warmth and suppleness. Needless to say that this girl had never had occasion to deal thus with a man-creature of her own age hitherto. What she had done, she had done with a steady and purposeful hand, but now it was over, she found herself shaking as if

from cold. Yet she was not cold. What was it? Dêh-Yān could put no name to this novel experience, and whilst she thought upon it, seated as far from her patient as the limits of the cave permitted (for the revulsive fit was upon her), it came over her with a horrid clearness how near she had been to handing this delightful, troublesome, beautiful, helpless, bewilderingly strange creature-comrade of hers over to the braves of her tribe. With a momentary gleam of insight, she saw him as he might have been at the stake. The sight wrung her heart. Ooh!—she groaned and clapped a hand over her mouth. Then, with a second gleam of prescience, she saw herself in a like predicament—as might yet be her fate—and laughed!

"What are you laughing at?" her man was asking weakly.

"I was thinking that I must get to my hunting—we cannot live long upon a stoat and a wallet-full of hedgehogs. Also I am thinking we must have skins for leggings and mittens," smiled the girl, lying glibly to conceal feelings of which she was half-ashamed.

The frost had not given, and wild life, hunger-

nipped, was getting over the first paralysing fear of making tracks. The big game, elephants and bison, would have moved down-stream for the winter, and lion would have followed them, and bear laid up to sleep off his fat. She knew as much. The edge of the covert was printed thickly with slot of hare, badger, fox, and marten. She could see that chamois and stone-buck had come down, but chamois and stone-buck were kittle cattle. There were the broad pads of a big tom-lynx. The girl looked them over narrowly, and knew them from wolf by the sign of hair upon the soles of the feet. She dreaded lynx, but meat she must have. There among the tangle of creeping pine (the *Pinus pumulus* which makes such desperately hard going) was the well-beaten run of capercaillie. Dêh-Yān followed it into the scrub as far as a fallen spruce, and set that log with twenty springes of deer-sinew, then, fetching a circle, she beat the covert with some small outcry back towards her nooses, and with results. The master-cock, a great black-bearded tyrant, twice as big as his wives, had got a hairy leg into trouble but had broken away, but not before six youngsters and hens, hastening to

their lord's assistance, had been themselves ensnared.

"Good!" said the man when the huntress panted up the cliff-face carrying an almost throttling necklace of heavy birds. "We have food for days. Give that covert a rest, Dêh-Yān. Also I have another reason. Listen. I dreamed of a hare whilst you were away. Danger is near."

Without a word, weary as she was, the girl left the cave and ascended the rock-face, climbing slowly and very carefully, keeping to the bare exposures lest she should leave incriminating sign, and, ensconcing herself in a juniper-bush, spied far and long over the white expanse.

The dream had already come true. There, below her and more than four miles away by our measurement, three tiny black specks moved slowly across a snowfield between two dark belts of wood.

The girl watched with a hardening mouth, bending upon these crawling black specks the wonderful, long-sighted eyes of a savage. Nearer they came and nearer; she made out and named each. There was Low-Mah, there was Pongu, and, worst of all, there was the detested Gow-

Loo, a brave whom she most particularly disliked, and with whose property she had accordingly made free when she left the tribe.

Plainly the man had missed his axes and spears, had revisited the camp where they had last been seen, and had not found them. Pongu in like manner had missed his bison-robes, and Low-Mah certain deerskins, properties which if cast away by girls in a panic-stricken rush would have lain where they fell. Each had his dog with him, and having failed in finding what they sought at the site of the snow-camp, they were casting up the glen with a certain air of grim determination which the watcher did not like.

They had reasoned the matter out and had ceased to believe in that bear, albeit just what had induced an unmarried girl to break away from her tribe and make a winter-hunting of her own was beyond them. It was a matter which needed clearing up.

There must be no fire for her man that day, nor next day, nor for a handful of days. Dêh-Yān spied from her bush, her patient from his cave, and once he heard the three hunters pass below him. A sprinkle of fresh snow had covered the girl's

tracks or this story would never have been written, but they had lit upon one of her springes and were justly scandalised. Her motive in absconding was still a mystery, but such conduct was outrageous. They would see the matter out and were curious in devising punishments for the truant.

But next day the girl beheld them in full flight down the glen before an angry bear.

This was to exchange one danger for another. It might well be that the dream portended this. Wolf, the dwellers in the cave did not fear, for no wolf could climb so steep a face, but a grizzly can go wherever a man can go on rocks.

Dêh-Yān told her fears to her husband, who bade her block the cave-mouth with big stones and let a spear be always beside him. Poor defence, but better than none; his arms were regaining flesh.

CHAPTER III

THE GHOST-BEAR

THE cold increased. Pŭl Yūn, debarred his usual exercise, suffered in his circulation and felt nipped within the robes which his nurse heaped upon him. "Mittens thou shalt have," said she, and made her promise good at the charges of a brace of blue hare, whose longs-and-shorts she patiently followed up until her throwing-stick decided the ownership of the peltries which she claimed. Pŭl Yūn watched her stitching; a needle snapped. "My wife will be wanting a touch of my skill," he said, and selected a shank bone, slim and straight, split it, and scraped the more promising piece to a point.

"That is all very well," said the Master-Girl, "but how about the eye? I have no bits small enough for drilling a needle-eye. We must punch our holes in the skin, and poke the sinew through with a forked bone, as when one nets."

"That makes clumsy stitches," remarked the man. "No, I do not think we shall come down to the punch. Thy needles are pit-eyed."

"We always make them so; how else?—with the centre-bit, a bent stick, a twist of hazel," said the girl.

"But we use the strung-drill. Hast never seen it?" She stared. "Then there is something that even a Little Moon woman can learn from her man!" He spoke in humorous mockery, but with a spice of malice, for truly this astonishing squaw of his had forereached upon her master in a manner beyond all precedent; would he ever get the whip-hand of her again?

She understood; she crawled to him cooing gently; patted his hand; they rubbed noses.

"Why are my needles clumsy?" she asked humbly, and he showed her that her people's method of boring the eye, a funnel-shaped hole driven from each side and meeting mid-way, necessitated a broader head than a small true hole drilled straight through at one asking.

"Our holes are big and shallow, yes, like ant-lion pits," she laughed. "That is because our

centre-bit wobbles; but how can one help the centre-bit wobbling?"

From the raffle of bones upon the floor (Cave-man was an untidy fellow, or 'tis little we should know about him)—from the remains of his yester-day's dinner Pŭl Yūn chose a young roe's shin-bone, sawed off the joint with care and sucked out the marrow. "I want," said he, "a small sharp stone to sit in that hollow. There are such in the bellies of bigger stones";—he meant quartz-crystals, and the Master-Girl nodded; so far his requirements presented no difficulty. "And I must have," he went on, "a couple of smooth rods of rowan or hazel as long as my arm; also an elder-stick as long as my hand."

There was meat in the larder for two days; the nurse was keen to provide playthings for her con-valescent, nor was she herself loth or incurious; within the hour she was back with a handful of sparkling gems from the hollow of a big pebble, and a pair of rods, one of which she watched her husband bend and string with a thong of deerskin.

Presently he had found a shard of rock-crystal to his mind, and had hafted it in the hollow bone with a morsel of pitch picked from his axe-head

and warmed in the embers. (It is singular, but beyond controversy, that the Old Stone men who used the drill so adroitly for small work, and could pierce the enamel of a bear's tooth, or the nacre of a sea-shell when a necklace was required, never applied their invention to the hafting of their weapons. An axe was apparently too serious a matter to be bored, nor did the presence of a natural hole in a flint pebble suggest the insertion of a stick, any more than the hole for the handle in a trade hatchet appeals to a South-Sea Islander of one of the more backward races; no, he stops the hole with gum and hafts as his forefathers did, and as Pŭl Yūn and Dêh-Yān did, in a cleft stick.)

What next?—Dêh-Yān, still very much in the dark but longing for light, watched her husband with absorbed attention. Now he had laid aside the strung rowan-rod and the armed bone for a moment, and was at work upon the elder-stick, working one end of it to a smooth rounded head, driving into the tough, yielding, pithy hollow of its opposite extremity the sharpened shank of the armed roe-deer's bone as far as it would go. He had now to his hand a short, solidly-made dagger, stoutly cylindrical in form, and bearing

as its head a glittering morsel of crystal. He next fastened the slip of hare's bone which he proposed to convert into a needle firmly to the handle of his axe, and bound the axe in turn to the thigh of his sound leg, raised his knee, and said:

"Now, I begin!"

"Wah!—this is a wonder! But have a care of thy broken ankle!"

"I will have a care. Give me that strung rowan-rod." He took it from her hand, bent it yet more, and looped the slackened thong once around the barrel of his drill, or bit, and then, using his own breast and left hand as a bearing for the smooth butt, applied the crystal point to the blind head of the needle and drew the bent rod swiftly from left to right. The drill revolved, its armature began to mark the bone, to penetrate infinitesimally. He reversed the action and again the tool spun and cut. He persisted, it began to excavate. Pŭl Yūn was no novice at the work, he had an instinctive appreciation of what his tool would bear, he knew to a nicety just what the fragile bone might be trusted to take without splitting.

"I am through, or nearly," said he, the sweat running into his eyes, for he was wholly out of

condition and the attitude was trying. "Let us turn the needle. I will work a little from the other side and then we can give it a point and a polish."

The Master-Girl, meanwhile, overlooked this new magic of the Sun-Men, with a breathless frowning intentness which (and this marks the woman we have to deal with) had no contempt in it. Your savage has a fathomless irrational scorn for the arts and usages of any other tribe than his own. A traveller who had photographed a group of Fingo women at their field work showed them a picture of a similar group of Pondos taken a fortnight before; there was a shout of derisive laughter. "They are using the long-handled hoe—*Baboons!*" Upon his return journey he showed the Fingo photograph to his Pondo friends; again the yell of scorn. "They are using the short-handled hoe—the *Baboons!*"

The girl's cast of mind, or her relation to this man, saved her from this fatal attitude of sterile complacency. She waited and watched, reserving judgment. Full approval was conceded, with an undercurrent of doubt as to the possibility of improvement. To her husband the size and curvature of his implement were fixed by custom and

unimprovable. To Dêh-Yān these dimensions were open questions. She experimented; would not a longer rod give longer strokes? He stared, but, being sensible beyond the run of men, and grateful somewhat, and what was possibly more to the point than all else, having no one to laugh at him[1] consented to give the larger drill a trial and presently found his tool biting faster.

Within the week the girl, having such a head upon her brown shoulders as is conceded to a savage but once in a thousand generations or so, after much watching and brooding made for herself a bigger drill from a bough of her own height, and seating herself opposite to her man, drove the bit rapidly, whilst he rested his arms and watched the holes deepen at a pace quite new to his experience. It was no longer needles but hunting-whistles.

It was whilst thus at work, he, seated with his face to the mouth of the cave, beheld the broad

[1] Children, countrymen, and savages are keenly sensitive to ridicule. It is the fear of failure and of becoming the butt of his fellows which keeps many a young labourer from attempting anything new. To have tried and failed is to incur some opprobious by-name that may stick to a villager through life. Rustic wit is cruel and drearily long-lived.

five-clawed fore-paw of a bear thrust up from below, feeling for foothold upon the smooth sill of the dwelling. The woman saw the living fear in his eyes, sprang for an axe, and was hacking hard at the protruding toes before they found their purchase. Thrice she beat them down, and when the great wrinkled, snarling muzzle and fanged cavern of a mouth came up within reach, she was too urgent and too sudden to be faced. The enemy withdrew deliberately beneath a pelting storm of stones not ill-directed.

It was all over, a brief struggle of wills between a girl and an ogre, but how intolerably long had it seemed to the footfast convalescent. It was over, and Pŭl Yūn listening to the final slide and scratching upon the rock and crash among the bushes beneath, drew deep breaths and looked upon this woman of his with a new and huge admiration, for not once had she cried for help, but thrice and four times had she bidden him keep still and respect his injured limb.

There are people who give vent to the surplus excitement generated by an adventure in chatter and exclamation; there are others who take it quietly. Pŭl Yūn was one of the latter; he felt the

imperative need of silence in which to review the thing, and see whether he had played the game. Had Dêh-Yān fallen into tears or gigglings, he would have been hard put to it to have borne with her; but it appeared that she was of his own way of taking things, and when for some while neither had spoken one word their mutual respects had deepened.

"Woman, that was well done!" said the man at length, and the girl nodded with a proud humility. She had played a great innings and knew it, but, having an intuitive understanding of man, she wisely forebore to celebrate her achievement with vaunts, as a brave of her tribe would certainly have done under like circumstances.

"We were near the end of our stones," remarked Pŭl Yūn, looking about him.

"We had only one left—this—" replied the girl. "I kept it to the last."

"That was lucky," admitted her husband, meaning more than he said, but it was a maxim in old days that a woman was little the better for praise.

"He will come again," he added doubtfully.

"Next time I—we will kill him," said Dêh-Yān

a little above herself. "I will get more stones, and bigger, for his entertainment."

"Yes, he will be back again; not to-morrow, perhaps, but within a while, when he has turned it over in his mind and thinks we have forgotten him," resumed the man, ignoring the woman's brag.

Dêh-Yān was sensible of her master's silent censure, and of a sex-superiority too secure of itself to need assertion, and shrunk back half meekly, half resentfully, but within a little found herself rising quietly and resolutely against its injustice. It must be so at present, no doubt, but it should not always be so. Meanwhile, her husband, satisfied with the effects of the snubbing, was speaking again.

"We shall certainly be looked up before long. But, there is something I do not understand about that bear, Dêh-Yān. In my country, south of the ranges, a brown bear ambushes and waylays, but rarely attacks by day and in the open. Is it more usual here? Are your people's weapons so weak that a bear has no fear of them? or is this a Ghost-bear, think you? This beast should either have followed your tribe down, or have laid up for the

winter. What is he doing abroad in snow? *Is he a bear at all?* Did any warrior of your tribe die during the past summer?"

"This was no brown bear—but a grizzly of the big kind,[1]—but—I think—" she paused, her hand over her mouth. "Saw-Kimo, the Old Chief's son, died—was found dead," she muttered reluctantly, for death is a very mysterious thing to your savage, and to speak of the recently deceased is unlucky; they may be about, anywhere, at your elbow, and may take offence; who can say?

"Was *found* dead?" questioned the man.

"Yes . . . no one saw how it happened. . . . A stone was thought to have fallen; so said Gow-Loo who found him."

"Oho, Gow-Loo? Was not that one of the three who came a-hunting you? Now tell me Dêh-Yān, and speak the thing that is——"

"I always do!" exclaimed the girl.

"I believe you, I shall always believe you. So, tell me, was not this Saw-Kimo one of the young braves who had asked for you? Yes?—And had not this Gow-Loo asked for you too?"

[1] She meant cave bear, *Ursus spelæus*, now extinct.

The girl nodded. "I was to have been given to Saw-Kimo, but—he died."

"It is very unlucky when stones fall in that manner. Gow-Loo painted his face for his friend, no doubt, and made great lamentation, as I should expect. Was it not so?—But, is there no witch-doctor in your tribe? Was there no smelling-out for blood?"

The girl shook her head. "There was talk of it in the Old Chief's teepee, but—Gow-Loo's people are strong, and he and his two friends, Low-Mah and Pongu, who always hunt with him (it was they who came upon the winter-hunting)—they were thought to have made gifts to the medicine-man and put him off the line, if indeed there was a line. I do not know—how should I?—I am only a woman. I did not like Saw-Kimo—much; but—" with sudden heat, "I hate Gow-Loo—and the others."

"Humph," grunted Pŭl Yūn, "it is curious that three braves who are tied up in a knot of this sort, and who are keen enough to go upon a winter-hunting together, should have run from a bear as they ran from this; right away down-stream and out of the valley, too. It is strange. But, if

they had reason to think he was their old friend Saw-Kimo that would explain a good deal."

"Perhaps he was very fierce—they had touched him, I think," argued the girl, willing to believe anything rather than that she and her crippled husband were beleaguered by her dead lover in the form of a Ghost-bear.

"Touched?—what makes you think so?"

"He seemed to climb clumsily. He had but one fore-paw to which he could fully trust, as it seemed to me. I watched him go, and he went lame in the shoulder, and it was not my stones that did that—no, there was a something there, a stump of a spear, as I think, and that is why he has lost some of his fat and cannot lay up for the winter."

"And, being too slow to catch bison-calf, he comes for us. My dream was a true sending. He is certainly your Saw-Kimo and will assuredly come back for you, Dêh-Yān."

"And so will *they*," muttered the girl, "for they must know they have left a spear-head in him and that he must be getting weaker. They will give the wound time to ripen and then——"

"It is time I was about again," growled the crippled hunter, and set to work upon his drilling

with a grim face. Dêh-Yān was kneeling upon his right hand, her left hand resting loosely upon the cave floor within his reach. Upon the impulse of the movement and without word or look, Pŭl Yūn struck swift and hard at the brown wrist with the elder bit that he was holding; the stick encountered the rock and split, for the slim brown wrist had been withdrawn with nimble rapidity. The eyes of the young people met and smiled—it was their first attempt at play. "My husband sees that I can take care of myself," remarked the girl sedately.

"That is well, Dêh-Yān, for with a Ghost-bear and a hunting-party of three in this glen, a woman has need of eyes in the back of her head," was the comment of her lover.

CHAPTER IV

HARD NEED, MOTHER OF INVENTION

THE days wore. Dêh-Yān went about her hunting with extreme precaution, cultivated eyes all over her brown body, pricked her small hairy ears perpetually, and moved through the most tangled coverts of trailing pine as silently as a fox.

Acting upon her husband's suggestion, she laid a trail about the main glen, and having completed the circuit, sat a day out ambushed beside her tracks to wit if any creature, whether lynx, wolf, ghost-bear, or man should be following up her spoor. None showed, and she grew uplifted of heart again, and as luck would have it, her hunting prospered for once beyond reason.

A roebuck met her face to face in a pass between two rocks. The small fellow was more than full-headed, he bore eight three-inch tines, any one of which was death to a naked woman, and for

a moment meant battle; but after a startled grunt tossed his head and doubled in panic. Dêh-Yān's throwing-stick broke his off hind leg below the hough, and she finished him after a fight in which the odds were still about even, for the charges of a roebuck at bay, even when upon three legs, are sudden and very difficult to avoid in deep snow. If he had once got the girl down she would never have risen again, but the affair went well, and Dêh-Yān, toiling mightily, won home with a load of meat and a deep-piled, mossy skin for her man to sit upon.

She had restocked the cave with missiles; scores of stones, as heavy as she could manage, were piled against the rock-sides of the dwelling ready at need. This was a three days' labour, and it was whilst resting after her last load and discussing the arrangement of their stores of artillery, that the singular incident occurred which resulted in—but I will not anticipate. The element of luck mingles in the best-laid schemes of human intelligence, chances lie thick about us, and genius consists in the recognition and utilisation of chance.

These strung-drills were common form to Pŭl

Yūn, who had known them all his life, and expected nothing more from them than they were made to yield, and had long since disclosed of use. As for playing with them, it had no more occurred to him to amuse himself by playing tricks with a strung-drill than it occurs to your harvest-man to use his scythe-handle as a vaulting-pole, or to your gardener to practise throwing with his fork at a target, or to toss and catch his spade. The implements of labour are invested with the seriousness due to maturity; respect should be paid to them; if one gets larking, something is sure to be broken. They are tools, not toys.

But, to the girl a strung-drill was a novelty, a thing beautiful and astonishing, an inexhaustible source of wonder and amusement, fraught with all manner of latent possibilities.

To Pŭl Yūn, a good conservative, it was unimprovable. The girl's audacious innovation had already outpaced him. There was much that was interesting, but nought that was sacred in the thing to her; she had amazed her husband by one improvement, and was about to astonish him yet more. Not that she was aware of what was coming, no; she was simply uneasy as yet in the

presence of a tricky piece of mechanism with unexplored capacities of use and delight in it. She did not sit down to invent, she simply started to play. And in this her sex and temperament gave her a pull over her comrade. A man loses much of his zeal for, if not the power of playing soon after sixteen—that is to say, for anything that is not a contest or a gamble—the so-called sports of manhood, cricket, footer, rowing, hunting, and what-not, are usually very exhausting, and frequently outrageously expensive forms of business from which the primary idea and essential qualities of play have disappeared. For it is of the very quiddity of play that it should be gay, irresponsible, jolly in a word, and who will be hardy enough to claim gaiety for croquet, or irresponsibility for bridge?

But most girls and many women can play at any time as naturally and spontaneously as a child or a kitten. Dêh-Yān, fortunately for herself, and for Pŭl Yūn (and for you and me)—Dêh-Yān, I say, possessed this happy faculty of amusing herself with whatever scrap of stone, stick, or string came within her reach. These strung-drills for example—she was forever stretch-

ing, releasing, twanging the things, studying their actions and re-actions, wondering at the difference in their notes, and had come within a little of discovering the germ of the lyre, when—well, what she did discover was of more importance than music to mankind in the making.

Pŭl Yūn had been for a month and more carving a tom-lynx out of a piece of bone. It was a spirited performance, for the man, like many of his race, was an artist. At this work Dêh-Yān, whose faculty lay in another direction, could not assist him, and thus, whilst he bent over his work, she was trifling with one of the strung-drills temporarily out of use. She had been trimming the hide of the roebuck and was still holding a sharp-edged shard of chert in her left hand, the hand which also held the taut, bent wood. She was plucking and releasing the string, listening to the twang of it, and by chance, by the veriest chance, the shard pricked her palm. She transferred it to her right, the string-hand, and plucked again. The loosened cord caught the stone, which flew across the cave and struck Pŭl Yūn above the ear, drawing blood.

"Wah! what was that?" he asked without

temper, and would be shown how she had done the trick.

It was amazing. Dêh-Yān whilst amusing herself had stumbled upon a property of the bent stick and cord which had escaped the dull eyes of countless generations of routine-ridden, unimaginative men.

The new play diverted the girl, and her husband through her, albeit neither as yet had caught a glimpse of its significance. Indeed, it was three days before Dêh-Yān (Dêh-Yān again!) discovered that a stick could be propelled endlong by the same agency.

They had hit upon the root-idea of the bow and arrow without knowing it, and like a thousand other excellent ideas, this might have perished without bearing fruit, but for the occasion which revealed its importance, lifting the fortuitous combination of two sticks and a string from the status of a toy to the dignity of a lethal weapon of the first rank.

[The luck of inventions is very various. We know a crabbed octogenarian who in boyhood invented a certain tool but could find no one to take it up, nor had he means to patent and push

it himself. He broke his model in chagrin, and sixty years later saw another man rediscover his idea and win wealth and fame by his discovery.]

It will be understood that since the Ghost-bear's attempted escalade the youthful householders had never felt safe. But suspense and fear did not break them down as a modern couple under similar conditions might have been broken down. Early man was a hunting animal, hunted in turn by beasts stronger but less cunning than himself. Among the first recollections of our ancestors would be that thrilling cry of *Wolf!* and the scurry for shelter of tiny bare feet up rock-faces too steep for the blunt claws of the secular enemy of childhood. When the shadows lengthened the fear of *bears* grew urgent (as it does to those cave-children's far-removed descendants to-day in nurseries lit by electric lights), a fear sedulously instilled by the careful cave-mother, for the shaggy urchin who "did n't care," and who adventured one step too far beyond the circle of firelight, never came back. (And left no progeny!)

We are the lineal heirs of a race of creatures who had the very best reasons for dreading the dark, hence you shall find among your acquaintance

tall men of fine physique and cultivated women whose almost complete emancipation does not include the liberty of walking around their own suburban tennis-courts alone after nightfall.

Pŭl Yūn and Dêh-Yān had had their warning; thenceforth their fire was never let out, nor at night did they both sleep at the same time.

Meanwhile the lynx was turning out well; there were no flaws in the bone, it worked kindly, and the tedious process of scraping and undercutting went on steadily.

"Give me but ten more days to get out of these splints and yet another ten to supple the stiff limb, Dêh-Yān, and then—let thy Ghost-bear lover come if he will, I will meet him at the cave-sill and stop him there."

Then he would expatiate after the manner of men upon the extraordinary virtues of his tribal Totem, the Sun God. "Oh, a good totem, a great totem, the best of totems."

"Yet not so good as mine," riposted the woman with conviction; "thou shalt see my Totem, the Little Moon, will have the better of it yet." She knew not what she meant, but for the fun of opposition she argued pertinaciously and had the last

word whilst testing the capacities of her new toy at a mark. Yes, it would send a big skewer the whole length of their dwelling and make it stick firmly into anything softish. Moreover, and this was a thing to take note of, you must shoot from the level of the eye and aim point-blank—no throwing high as with an assegai. She was learning more than she knew. She played at this childish game at intervals for some days, gradually lengthening the skewers, and attaining a pretty creditable proficiency, watched with a good-humoured tolerance by her husband, and might, in the end, have played her game out and wearied of her toy without getting to the bottom of it, had not the Thing happened that I am about to tell.

There came a bitter night with the wind edging in and out of the cave-mouth and compelling the youngsters to shift the fire and the bed-skins to the far end if they would keep a light or sleep at all. Pŭl Yūn had taken his spell off, shuddering and muttering in sleep, and Dêh-Yān, shivering in her bison robe, had kept watch. The last silver shard of a waning moon hung low over the forest spires south-eastward, the cave-woman made silent obeisance to the god of her private orisons, bending

low and striking the rock floor with her forehead. "Little Moon!—be good to my man—and to me!" She grovelled prone, and as she did so something snapped beneath her; it was one of her assegais. She raised it and examined it in the dim light, good enough for a woman of a race which still saw well enough in the dark. The mischief was done, the thin tapering shaft had parted at a knot-hole, a flaw in the wood selected by its maker, the loutish Gow-Loo. The keen, leaf-shaped chert head of the weapon had less than an arm's length of shaft behind it, and until re-mounted was useless as a throwing-spear.

Pŭl Yūn sat up at the sound, asked and was told its cause, and scolded his wife for her carelessness. She excused herself, and even as they spoke, querulously as sleepy folk may be excused for speaking who are miserably cold and are talking down a blusterous wind (and perhaps too loudly for a hunted folk), the Terror was upon them!

There, upon the sill-platform beyond the cave's mouth, and disregarding the dull ash of a dying fire let down because the night was over, stood the great Ghost-bear, huge and hairy, terrible, black against the first pallor of the dawn, obliterating

Dêh-Yān's Totem, nullifying and intercepting the answer to her prayer.

Escape was none; nor was resistance reasonably possible. The enemy was already within their defences; had made good his footing; yet Pŭl Yūn without a word of reproach to the woman whose ear had for once been at fault, gripped his axe and sat square with clenched teeth and narrowed nostrils. No moan escaped him, his time had come; he would shew his squaw how a Sun-disc brave could take his death.

The girl's heart seemed to swell upwards until it filled her body, and thrust against her throat. She did not cower, or shriek, or cover her eyes, but crouched for a spring—if such might be possible; she would give away no fraction of a chance. Her man was doomed; nothing that she could do, nothing that ten men in her place could have done, would save him. But, life is very, very sweet—*What of herself?* Could she, or could she not, slip past and escape? Yes, it was possible. She was wearing kilt and kaross, she slipped out of both and stood nude and slippery, agile as an eel. Her garments she proposed to toss in the bear's face, then to throw her bison robe over

his head and to dart past him whilst momentarily entangled.

"*And leave your man—the loveliest, kindest, cleverest, wisest, best creature that ever lived—to this Ghost of the silly Saw-Kimo to be chawed and mumbled alive? To have the bone that is almost knit cracked and sucked . . . whilst you run away?*"

Something within the woman, not recognisably herself, put this very pertinent question. Who was the speaker?—Unquestionably it was the Totem, the Little Moon of her prayers, so she persisted to her dying day. The innate womanhood of the Master-Girl, that passionate self-devotion, self-immolation, of which the sex in every land and under every manner of garb and rite has proved itself capable,[1] arose and strove. No, she would not go forth safe, alone and humbled she would die with her man, *for* her man, indeed, for this matter should be taken fighting.

Tossing her clothing behind her, she stooped

[1] A capacity independent of religious sanctions and of future hopes. What celestial reward did Eucharis expect, the freedwoman of "light life," whose constancy on behalf of her friend, the falsely-accused Octavia, exhausted the infernal ingenuities of Nero?

and groped right and left, snatching for spears, axes, anything in the darkness.

When she looked again the huge beast had shuffled sidelong past the hot ashes, and was standing over her husband. Pŭl Yūn had thrown back the hand that held the axe for one last stroke. The bear, just beyond reach, certain of his meal, and perhaps not particularly hungry, or, it may be, disposed, as are all beasts of prey, to play with his victim, snarled joyously and half-arose upon his broad haunches, hanging a vast bestial head over the seated man, its pestiferous darkness imperfectly lit by the green glitter of an eye.

Exactly over the brute's head, and between his round ears, Dêh-Yān caught sight of that pale, thin sickle of moon, her moon, her people's god and hers! Her right hand held the broken assegai, her left the longest strung-drill (she had snatched it from the floor in mistake for a spear). There was no time to seek another weapon; the spears, as she now remembered, lay between Pŭl Yūn and the Ghost-bear. If there was to be fighting she must fight with this toy, nought else.

With an almost bursting heart she fitted the stump of that broken assegai to the string—I have said it had parted at a knot; the knot-hole provided a natural and quite effective nock. The girl drew suddenly, hugely, and with the strength of her despair, until the chert head lay upon her thumb; she aimed at that green eye and loosed with a cry, "Moon, help me!" The cave hummed to the twang of the cord, the green light of the eye went out. There was a reverberating, snarling roar, the enemy, instead of charging, backed, shaking his head in a horrid agony, and as he reached the sill, having lost his marks, reared and, clawing his mask with both paws, fell over the edge backwards —down—and down!

Open-mouthed, incredulous, the youngsters listened for the rasp of claws and the sounds of a re-ascent. Instead, after a perceptible interval, came a dull, pounding crash. He had gone to the bottom, taken the full fall, a hundred feet or more. There was moaning, fainter and more faint. Silence came before daylight showed them the extent of their deliverance and their abounding, enormous wealth.

There at the foot of the cliff lay the dead mon-

ster, huddled and broken and burst! Incredible—but true.

Pŭl Yūn had held Dêh-Yān in his arms for a minute which seemed an hour; neither had spoken whilst the Ghost-bear's dying was going on, and those gruesome sounds came up from below. For once Dêh-Yān's nerve had failed. She had clung to her husband, dumbly shuddering, conscious of what she still possessed and had so nearly, nearly lost. Of her own escape she was thinking not at all, nor of her amazing feat—at present.

Pŭl Yūn was the first to pull himself together. As a conservative he felt that the hour might not pass without the ritual proper to the occasion, the *hallalai* sanctioned by custom and use. So he sang the Bear-Song, an ancient chanty which had come down from the youth of his tribe; replete with absurd boasting, insults to the slain, and gastronomic anticipations; but, even whilst trolling it out upon the frosty air and watching his hot breath smoke in the red dawn, he felt less than himself, and knew well who by right should have been celebrating the victory. (Only, who ever heard of a squaw singing the Bear-Song?) He had not borne himself ill, as he knew; but, had not

another interposed, this ogre had been cracking his marrow-bones by this time.

Meanwhile, Dêh-Yāṇ, being intensely practical, was hardly giving her husband's music the applause and critical attention which he may have thought due to it. Hungry and cold as she was she must set to work ere the great unwieldy carcass should have stiffened, and labouring as she had never laboured in her life, heaved, thrust, wrenched and tugged until the hide came away. During this mænadic spasm of toil I am bound to confess that my heroine worked stark naked despite the cold, and neither ate nor drank save for the morsels of raw bear-meat with which she filled a distended cheek at intervals. But Dêh-Yān, though a savage, was no fool. She knew, none better, that the smell of so much spilt blood would bring upon the scene eagle and lammergeier, buzzard and raven, and what she feared more, wolverene, lynx, wolf, and she knew not what beside, possibly man! Whilst it lay there it was a menace to herself and to her husband; but, promptly and properly dealt with, it was wealth and food and safety for the remainder of the winter.

The hide when off proved an unhandy burden,

made still more massive by its accumulations of frozen blood and snow. Two whole deerskins went in thongs before a cord was knotted by which she, Pŭl Yūn assisting, drew the load up the cliff to the cave. Nor was the girl even then content with her day's work, but ere the short winter's day closed, had lit fires on three sides of the carcass and begun to strip the bones.

The salving of that bear's-meat was a four-days' poem. By the fifth evening the youngsters were victualled for the rest of the winter, and Dêh-Yān had not one thumb-nail's breadth of cutting-edge upon the last of her chert flakes. She was also dead beat.

The whole of the sixth day and the following night the girl slept the deep, dreamless sleep of a healthy organism wearied out, watched by Pŭl Yūn, who had seen to it that she had gorged herself to repletion before lying down, and who had himself rubbed her swollen joints vigorously with fat, and who watched over her whilst she slept beneath the vast hairy spoil of her twice-dead lover.

"Saw-Kimo," jeered the young brave during the long chilly night watches, "this is the third

time thou hast bid for my woman. She was not for thee, or thy Little Moons. She is mine! mine! —I tell thee!—Was there ever such a woman?—never! I have seen two bears die in my time on the other side of the ranges, but they were brown bears, and young bears at that, yet they died within a ring of as many braves as they (or thou) had claws upon their feet. It took the whole strength of a war-party to bring either of them to bay and keep them there. We brought two braves who did not go home with us. One we buried to each bear. And, look thou at thy business, O Saw-Kimo (if that be thy name), and whimper for shame, thou who died at one stroke, and that from the hand of a squaw—of a girl! a stroke in the eye of thee; in the brain of thee. Such a stroke! And thou a cave grizzly! Was there ever such a woman?"

So Pŭl Yūn: for the glory of the feat had got upon his imagination. The more he sang of it, the less he understood it. You must remember that his knowledge of how the thing had been done was all by hearsay. The bolt had been discharged from behind him, and owing to the darkness of the cave, he had not watched it home; Dêh-Yān's

description of the wound, and of the chert assegai-head still enfixed in the eye-socket, was unsatisfying. He must see for himself, some day, soon—yes, at once—the great stripped skull which lay a hundred feet beneath him. And whilst he pondered a certain familiar sound reached his ears from the foot of the cliff; it was the cracking of a bone. Some furry scavenger of the forest had been drawn to the carcass and would not be long without competitors. The man must risk something. He cast loose his bandages and splints, crawled to the sill, and hurled stone after stone upon the marauder. Nor did his leg suffer. The bone had knit.

The scraping, greasing, and suppling of that immense hide was a laborious business, but a labour of love for Dêh-Yān, whose heart was both big and high within her. There was no tribal record, no legend even, of any woman having killed a bear in single fight. Yet she held her tongue, and silently grew in moral stature.

Pŭl Yūn might sing about his wife's prowess, but he was not to be convinced of the superiority, or even of the use, of her new weapon. He was a spearman: as a spearman, an expert with the

assegai, he had won the deputy-chieftainship, the War-Chieftainship, of his tribe. What was possible with the spear he could do; but this fiddling with a strung-drill was too novel, too womanish, too uncertain as yet. He would have none of it.

The girl, already convinced and sanguine, wisely desisted from argument. By help of the cord the massive skull was hauled up from below to tell its tale to deaf ears, to be admired, turned over, its death-wound marvelled at, and its lesson ignored. The man set himself to dig out the enormous white fangs. He also detached those twenty black curving claws, arranged, studied, and pored over them, watched by Dêh-Yān. She knew by intuition what was passing in his mind and waited. This was the critical, the dangerous point of their married life.

Who was to wear those teeth? those claws?

He put the question from him (she had not raised it); it would wait, the trophies were not ready for wearing as yet, they must be drilled before they could be strung. Dêh-Yān saw that her husband needed something but was too sulky to ask, and by a real intuition fetched him the lengths of elder

which he required for this new drilling and left him to his work, setting herself to study the properties of her new weapon. There was nothing to take her afield, stacks of frozen bear-meat blocked the cave, she could experiment at her leisure, and had conquered some of the initial difficulties before her man, glumly busy up above, knew anything about them.

Thus, the girl found that assegai-heads were too heavy, and assegai-shafts too stout for successful shooting; terrible at point-blank range, at anything over twenty strides they wobbled and swerved and fell short, and Dêh-Yān the practical argued, and argued rightly, that unless her shafts flew farther and straighter and bit deeper than a thrown assegai, she had better keep to the orthodox method. She needed chert or flint to make for her arrows smaller and lighter heads, but neither chert nor flint was to be found in that valley, nor was it possible for her to adventure the week's journey down-stream to the chalk cliff which was the only source known to her of the tribe's cutting-tools. But, womanlike, she remembered her needles, and in default of chert fell to experimenting with bone tips attached to lighter shafts by

rosin and sinew, the hafting method of the Little Moons. She succeeded from the first attempt, settling after many trials to a shaft as long as her own arm, made herself ten upon this pattern, and practised sedulously. Skill came apace, far more quickly to this tense-sinewed, one-ideaed savage woman than it would come to a modern; and at the end of three days' constant archery she found herself able to put all ten arrows into a small circle marked out upon a snow-bank at full assegai-range. Beyond this range her missiles disappointed her, they still wobbled. As a practical spear-thrower she knew what was lacking—there was no spin upon them. How could this be remedied? This question lay down with her at night and arose with her in the morning. She besought her Totem for wisdom, but got never a sign. A sacrifice was needed; she vowed to the Moon the first-fruits of her bow, and greatly daring, adventured out into the wintry forest armed with her new weapon and nought else. What would the God send (the moon is a man to the savage)—fur or feather? A little hazel-grouse trotted out into the glade; the shot was a difficult one, impossible with spear or throwing-stick, owing to over-

hanging boughs, but the girl prayed as she drew and brought it off. Her heart filled with gratitude, her Totem was still watching over her for good. This should be a whole-burnt offering; a few feathers alone would she retain as her own share of the spoils, the first that ever fell to her bow (the Ghost-bear always excepted).

Whilst walking cave-ward, these curving flight-feathers in hand, something in their curvature, their shapes, aroused her superstition. "*Moon-feather*," she whispered, and attached one of them to one of her shafts. The feather was narrow, stiff, and strongly curved, it refused to lie along the shaft, but must needs curl somewhat around it when bound thereto by small sinews at either end. Dêh-Yān's first shot with it at her snow-bank target flooded her bosom with adoring gratitude, for here was the thing she had sought and prayed for—the shaft spun as it flew! Again and again she essayed shots at increasing ranges and still the wonder persisted; at fifty, yes, and at sixty paces the shaft flew straight, swerving neither to left nor right. All her shafts were presently feathered, and, since the principle eluded her, and some behaved better than others, she must practise

daily, watch, consider, and think, and within a while she came to a practical conclusion, to closely imitate the feathering of those which spun the best.

CHAPTER V

THE TESTING OF THE NEW THING

AND now there was gloom in the household. Pŭl Yūn was gaining strength daily and as irritable as your convalescent is permitted to be. His leg was not yet sound enough, or supple enough to attempt the descent of the face, for the knee-joint creaked from its six weeks of disuse; on the other hand, it could not get enough of play within the limits of the cave. His nerves excited him, his temper was less even than when he was helpless, and, worst of all, his conscience would not let him be.

Dêh-Yān put up with her man's petulant outbreaks and slaved for him harder than ever. A diet of dark bear-meat—solid bear-meat daily and twice a day, although admirably suited to keep up bodily warmth, is hard upon the liver unless regulated by abundant exercise, which in the case of her husband was out of the question. She

cast about for something lighter, but game was getting scarce in the immediate neighbourhood of the cave, or indeed in the glen itself. She had hunted it too closely and too long; it was the depth of winter in the mountains, migratory life had long since left for the lower levels, resident life was scanty. Dêh-Yān betook herself to trapping. A bird of some kind her man should have.

Pŭl Yūn, peering moodily from his cave platform, watched her bending over a trap far below and a long way off. The cackle of a chough came up clearly through the cold air, a danger-signal, and it struck h'm as singular that the bird should be calling so far from the woman, for as a rule they ignored her movements unless she were within, say, a hundred paces, yet he put the matter from him; no dream had given him prescience of impending danger.

The girl, busied at her work, crouched beside her gin, her deerskin quiver upon her shoulder, her bow laid beside her hand. The man was annoyed at the sight, he distrusted this new-fangled plaything of hers; why could she not carry spears as he would have done, as he was going to do in a week or so? Everything she did, or failed

to do, had power to annoy the poor fellow now. That she bore with him so quietly was an offence in itself. Had she answered him back, had she met him half-way in the quarrel which he had been provoking for a week past, he would have taken such an attitude in good part. That is to say, he would have found it natural and treated it naturally, beaten her, to wit, as every savage man has ever done since the male subjugated the female.

But Dêh-Yān's gentle, unselfish reserve, and ever perpetual activities on his behalf, gave him never an opening.

So he watched her moodily, *jealously*—come, the secret is out at last, we have a name for the complaint.

This is one of the primitive passions. It is one which we share with, or inherit from, the brutes. A cat, a lap-dog, a parrot will sicken of jealousy. Children, savages, uneducated people, our semi-educated fellow-citizens (our new masters), are subject to severe and protracted fits of this torturing disease. We have known a working man, middle-aged, of failing health, and with a sickly wife and young family to support, to throw up a foreman's post of twenty-eight shillings the week

and begin life again upon seventeen as a common labourer, from sheer jealousy of one of the gang under him whom he could not induce his firm to discharge without a reason.

Women are more liable to the malady than men because they have, upon the whole, less distraction for their minds. A man can escape from the proximity of his enemy (once possibly his friend): he can steep his mind in business, in politics, in literature, in sport. A woman has her rival ever at her elbow, in her kitchen, in the nursery, in the schoolroom, or next door.

In the case of poor Pŭl Yūn the position was reversed. It was he who, with hardening muscles and strengthening passion, was debarred from healthy and adequate physical exercise, and was fain to eat his heart in bitterness of spirit,with an accusing conscience ever at his elbow, a housemate for which he had no name, for the Thing, like many other things, rheumatism, gravity, panic-terror, malaria, etc., although maleficent, had not yet been separated, personified, and named.

Picture him overlooking with the beady, deep-set, far-sighted eyes of the savage, like an eagle from his eyrie, the doings of his jealously loved

squaw a half-mile away and three hundred feet below.

There, she had set that gin, and half arose, her chert-knife in one hand, her bow in the other. Sudden as the pounce of a lynx (and nothing in nature save the stroke of a snake can be swifter), a man leapt upon her from the scrub. Pŭl Yūn caught his breath, for the enemy had her by the kaross and must have borne her down had not his foot caught in a trailing bough of *pumilus*. As it was, it was the nearest thing in the world, for as he stumbled, still fast to her, the skewer at her throat snapped, he reeled back with the kaross, the woman was free. He was at her again, but she doubled under his tossed-up arm, striking back and up as she did so and getting him in the arm-pit as her husband thought. By some means she was at liberty, off and away; not along the glade, but winding swift and puzzlingly amid the tangling scrub of which she knew every game-track by heart. This was the saving of her, as Pŭl Yūn saw, and breathed again, for two other hunters now upsprang from beside the path which they had anticipated her flying feet would follow. These seemed for a moment somewhat out of it, for their

quarry had doubled back and secured a lead, but they were hardened braves in the pink of condition, winter-hunters who seemed to know the valley, and once clear of that patch of scrub what would happen?

There is but one thing that can happen when an unarmed woman is set upon by three armed men, unless, indeed, she be helped. But how was Dêh-Yān to be helped?—and by whom? By himself only! He smote his stiff knee and yelped a short and very bitter laugh. Yes, the girl must come to him for help at the last.

Meanwhile she was playing the game, running her ring about the thicket, as a vixen does when roused. There was just the off-chance that she might throw her pursuers out, and get back to her earth unviewed. But, with three men (and such men), it was the poorest of chances, and she was incurring the most outrageous risks. She had boasted somewhat to him of her speed, and he had believed that she was fleet for a woman, but what woman, or what man for the matter of that, could stand up before three? She was heading down-glen when he lost sight of the chase, and every step would have to be retraced, and the double

made in face of a runner-up pressing her for all he was worth, and flankers running wide to cut her off when she turned.

He threw himself upon the cave floor and gnawed his knuckles in impotent chagrin.

She should not have turned. She should have headed straight for him at once. They would have stood out the siege together, and died together, for that was what it would have come to, as he saw too clearly.

As for his wife making a successful stand anywhere or under any circumstances, and fighting it out with that new Thing of hers, the idea never occurred to him once during the long hours of his lonely vigil.

The shadows of the winter's day lengthened. The imprisoned man had given up hope. His wife did not come, would never come to him again. The husband's heart grew heavy with the sorrow which settles down upon the watcher whose anxieties are over at last, whom the worst has befallen.

For himself he did not particularly care. He had no fear that she would give him away under torture. Dêh-Yān would be staunch to the last,

of that he was assured, doing her justice now that she was gone. He had stores enough for another four months, and long before that would be as sound a man again as ever he was. But this cave would be a hateful place without his squaw. Nor could he face the thought of returning to his tribe without her, empty-handed, with nothing to show for his winter's hunting. This was a humiliation not to be borne, the sneering enquiries of his cousin and rival, the wonder of his fellow-braves, the eyes of the women. No wife and no scalps?

Whether besieged or no, Pŭl Yūn would stay back and avenge her. What was she worth in Little Moon lives? He held up all his ten fingers and solemnly gloomed upon them. Ten should die for her—if he lived—not less. So the night wore.

Then a stick cracked below in the darkness, and her signal, the shrill whistle of the marmot, rang out. His heart leapt, he gripped his axe and a stone for a down-throw; she would be hard pressed to a surety, but why did the fool-creature make such a noise? 'Twas madness!

He hirpled to the lip of the rock platform and

craned over, peering down into the impenetrable dusk below, ready for action, listening, eye, ear, and nostril at stretch for news of the whereabouts of his foes. But the only sounds were the scrape of his squaw's moccasins and her hardly-taken breaths. How heavily she climbed! Was she wounded? She did not reply to his low-spoken questions. She was coming nearer, nearer; his eyes, accustomed to seeing in the worst of lights, could make out her bare unbandaged head and shoulders, her arms too; there seemed little the matter with what of her he could see. Her kaross was gone, he had seen it go, she was still encumbered with that silly bag of arrows, and the big bow-drill hampered her climbing. Drawing her breath in gasps, she reached the sill of the cave, crawled in, and sat mutely panting, her eyes shining glassily in her head. She seemed unharmed; she was unharmed; it was wonderful—amazing! Now, what had happened? Why could not the creature speak? "What of the chase, Dêh-Yān?"

Still mute and with an open mouth drawn up from the teeth with the muscular contraction of extreme toil, she unrolled and laid out before him

in the dusk, *one — two — three* bloody scalps each with the top-knot of a brave, raw, fresh-stripped.

Pŭl Yūn caught his breath in with a harsh cry, "*Wah!—What?—How?—Where?*" but the woman squatting over her spoils did not answer. She had reached her farthest. She swayed, she leaned, she collapsed, she tumbled forward almost into his arms.

The man drew the bearskin over her as she lay shuddering, whimpering. He marvelled to hear her long-drawn sobbing in the darkness. This was new indeed; never had he known her to weep. Presently she relaxed and slept. He watched her slumber, gnawing a tortured lip, incredulous and convinced, exulting and humiliated, adoring and furiously jealous by fits. What would come out of this? 'T was glorious! But 'twas absurdly disconcerting! Wonderful, no doubt, past whooping, but not to be put up with!

At midnight she awoke with a start, sighed once, rubbed her eyes, put back her hair, pulled herself together, and was a new creature. Ashamed of her weakness, she silently got to her feet, made up the fire, and cooked food for both.

Pŭl Yūn watched her; would give her time; when she had eaten forth it came.

She had led her pursuers over a long and difficult line, hoping to throw them out, but Gow-Loo, though less fleet than she, was not to be shaken off; in fact he had pressed her hard and fired thrice as the leading greyhound fires at his hare, whilst the others, running to point, had headed off her attempts at doubling. The men were in training, knew the country, and thought to wear her down by sprinting in succession. Again, and yet again, had her turn of speed been the saving of her. But she was getting a long way down the glen and the daylight held. It would see her out unless she changed her tactics; in a little while she would be out of her country and (for aught that she knew) in theirs, then the game would be up.

So, tightening her throat, she had made up her mind, and doubled right-handedly, close across the line of Low-Mah, whom she believed she had hurt, taking the risk of his assegai at short range. Her judgment justified itself when the hunter threw short with a gasp and she slipped past him and made her point, a salient rock-face that she knew, steep, narrow, where she could neither be over-

looked nor outflanked. There, at more than a very tall spruce-tree's height from the last stones of the scree below her, she had chosen her ledge and stood at bay, regulating her breath and schooling her swimming head for the final tussle.

"I think those rocks were not wholly new ground to thee," suggested the listener.

"I had been up there before—three years back, when I was a girl. Our old men call them 'The Two Fangs,' but the tribe has renamed them; they are 'The Hungry Boys' since—since something happened there which is not good to speak about." She shot a glance over her shoulder to make sure that The Dead were not listening. "Three of our unproved lads, two half-growns and a child, whilst berrying were driven up that cleft by a wolf. They were not found in time. The two boys must have eaten the little one. Then, who knows?—perhaps they fought with knives. They were found up there, dead,—with the bones."

"Ugh! not a clean place after dark. Surely your children went wide of it in all lights. How then——?"

"The boys I played with dared me. Not one of them would do it.—There was a gnawed

finger-bone still in a crevice.—So I knew my footholds to-day."

Pŭl Yŭn laid his hand upon his mouth, and perused this wife of his in the flicker of the brands. There was nothing in this by-incident to excite surprise—a piteous tragedy—the coarse woof of savage life is occasionally shot by such a crimson warp. His mental vision was busy with this woman's adventure, picturing the tall, splintered *aiguille*, springing sheer from its scree, cleft by its one narrow *cheminée* leading to its one broad platform ledge so far aloft there. Yes, he had realised the *mise-en-scène*, and could follow the woman's weary voice carrying on her story, and could accompany her point by point.

The pursuers had seen that she was at the top of a blind *couloir* from which was no escape upward. Saw too that the overhang protected her from anything sent down from above. Saw too that the rock was absolutely sound, and that she had *nothing to throw* (a point in their favour).

Then, since daylight was waning, they determined to put the thing through. Their camp, dogs ("good wolves"), karosses, and sleeping-robes were hours away. There was neither fuel nor

water upon that scree beneath the cliff. After all, strong runner as she was, this was only a girl—unarmed, and probably spent.

Up came the leading couple, boldly and close together, and only when fully committed to the business, recognised the trap.

The girl, who had by this time recovered her wind, held her fire until the leading climber's top-knot showed twenty feet below her ledge. She knew him for Gow-Loo; he turned his head, saw her leaning above him, handling the absurd bent stick which she had carried throughout the run, and, getting his breath, made her a mock offer of marriage, the same bitter little jeer that he had cast after her thrice during the chase. As he made it, he laid his head back upon his shoulder the better to leer at his helpless victim, now safely under his hand, and—even as he bared his dog-tooth, a little short, light assegai was sticking deeply beneath his ear. The stricken man plucked hard at the shaft with one hand, but the bone head was barbed and he could not draw it. He uttered no cry, possibly from shame, more probably from inability to articulate, and his fellow-climber, Pongu, just below him in the *cheminée*, getting no

reply from him, and craning out to learn why his leader had stopped, knew not what had happened before a second shaft was driven hard and deep between collar-bone and shoulder-blade into his own lung, which brought him, too, to a stand, with his mouth and nose full of blood.

Each man knew that he was hard hit, but knew not of the other's hurt; each felt the immediate need of getting down, but neither could speak, nor warn the man below him to vacate the foot-holds. To give ground to a young squaw was too bitter; both held on grimly, doggedly, and too long.

Low-Mah, the lowest, came up the cleft haltingly, crippled by that stab in the arm-pit that we know of, and which he had known for hours past to his bitter cost. The point of the Master-Girl's knife, whilst making a quite inconsiderable puncture, had touched one of the nerves of the brachial plexus; his right arm felt heavy and numb and was giving him exquisite agony, which he was bearing as mutely as a wolf. He knew by trial that he could not throw, but thought he could climb. His honour was engaged. To be known henceforth as the warrior who was lamed by a squaw? Not he!

He saw that the leaders had stopped, and without visible cause, although Pongu, two spears' lengths above him, was coughing fast and hard. He could not see their wounds, or the weapons which had caused them, but the patter of falling blood from the severed artery in Gow-Loo's throat warned him of something amiss. Then an assegai clipped past his own ear very close. Phew! what was this? Whence had this she-lynx weapons? Was this an old haunt of hers? and had she led them up this cleft to spear them with javelins stored for the occasion? His position, almost exactly beneath his leaders, had its advantages; their bodies screened him; he offered the smallest of marks—but (a fear suddenly gripped him, bred by the silence and immobility of those leaders) what if one of them should fall? He hailed them by name, but elicited no reply. "I must get from under them while I may," thought he, and attempted a traverse, a ticklish piece of work for a man so hampered. If he could but escape from this *cheminée*, this death-trap, and win around the buttress to the left, he would, as he reckoned, be under cover. He made the move and not a moment too soon. Why, oh why, had

not one or the other of his mates fought his way up within swing of a tomahawk?—there is no throwing to be done while scaling a vertical fissure. Tomahawk, indeed! Gow-Loo, being by this time in exceeding evil case, and growing blind and weak, dropped his hatchet, and a moment later, with never a cry of warning, let go altogether; his knees buckled, his body bent, and down he came upon Pongu and took him to the bottom with him. There they lay, their life's business accomplished, the matter disposed of so far as they were concerned.

Then Low-Mah, for almost the first time in his life, knew fear. Yet it no more unnerved him than the proximity of the leading hound relaxes the sinews of a failing fox. Desperately, yet cautiously, he wrought to put that salient overhang of cliff between him and the Master-Girl; it was but a matter of a spear's length; if he gained it he were safe. He had paused in his climb—as who would not?—when the bodies of his friends rushed down past him; quickly he withdrew his eyes from them where they lay; to look too long upon such a sight does a climber no good, and in another step he had won shelter and comparative safety, when—

how say it?—his left arm, the one upon which he chiefly depended, was pinned down to its shoulder by a small, but astonishingly hard-thrown assegai! Oh the pang of it!—and the ignominy of being twice maimed and held up by a squaw! He gnashed his teeth hearing the clear triumphant laugh of the Master-Girl above him, and then in a wink that laugh had changed to a thrilling, brief scream, and something light came bounding down the fissure, the bent stick the girl had held in hand when she crossed him. He must glance up, knowing his wound, but not yet understanding his luck, nor perceiving that his enemy was already disarmed, and saw that enemy in a very close place, for she, whilst laughing, had been overcome by one of those revulsions which lie in wait for the overstrung. Her desperate exertions, her desperate risk, followed by such unimaginable success, had shaken her; she had leaned too far over watching the effect of her shaft, and had almost followed it.

"And, O husband" (let the Master-Girl tell the adventure in her own words), "then, for the second time, I so nearly gave up! The first time was when Gow-Loo made his last sprint for me.

My heart seemed bursting, my legs shook as I raced. He got within throw.—I felt all up my back what was coming. '*This is the end*,' I thought —but his hatchet struck my quiver. Then I took fresh heart, I remembered thee. '*My man shall not starve like a sick badger in his earth. Little Moon, help my man*,' I prayed! and new strength came to my legs, and Gow-Loo dropped back blown. It was after that that I doubled and all came right. But now, for the second time, I thought all was over. I had overbalanced, I stumbled, I let fall my bow and my last arrow, and came down twice my height, scrambling, and clutching hard. When I stopped and my eyes cleared I was in a bad place and could find no footholds for ever so long. But, again I thought of thee, and again I cried to my Totem, and lo, at once my right foot was on something, and I was safe."

"Safe!" echoed Pŭl Yūn hoarsely, catching his breath, "with all thy weapons at the foot of the cliff, and that half-crippled wolf between thee and them? Was there no scraping past him?"

"It was not to be done. He was well placed astride the outer angle of the buttress with both

feet firm; but the only holds for getting down that *cheminée* lay close under his hand, and he knew it. I worked down to within my length of him, but it would not do. I had to return to my ledge and wait."

"And he?"

"He made mouths at me and said all the worst that he knew. No, I will not tell thee what he said. This is his scalp, is not that enough?"

"Nay, but I *will* hear. What said he?"

"First he fixed his eyes upon mine and would have charmed me down, and when that would not serve, he must show me point by point what must be the end; this hold, and that hold, and then the one next to him; and that, as I must needs come down feet foremost, he would set his hand or his teeth in me for he was too badly hurt to get down himself. And it was all '*Come down to me, my little Love, and thou and I will go gently to the bottom together, and thou shalt sleep long* (*Oh long!*) *and soundly* (*very soundly*) *in my arms!*'"

"Eh, but he said *that?*" blurted the husband. "Which didst say was his scalp?"

"What matter?—nay, thou must not spoil it! It was almost the last thing he did say. Oh but

we were thirsty, he and I! I sucked the rock!—and cold—we were cold; I could see him shaking. Is he cold now, dost thou think? I hope he is very, very cold."

"And then?" asked the husband, recovering himself, and prosaically detached from the possible sensations of a dead enemy, but Dêh-Yān paused.

Yes, what then?—for there seemed no way out of this stalemate. The man might cling on there until the woman above him perished of the night's wind-frost, of exhaustion, or thirst, or made some despairing attempt and met her death so.

But, what of the other, the brute denizens of the glen?—The rapid movement of a chase hath a stimulating influence upon whatever is within sight or hearing. Have we not seen the apparition of a pack of hounds in full cry set a whole countryside in motion? horses at grass, calves, colts, sows, pigs of all sizes breaking bounds, yea, the heavy-footed Wessex labourer, school-children, and the village postman upon his rounds, swept out of their several orbits and drawn into the tail of the passing comet?

Yes, these four racing figures had been seen, and

noted, and followed as far as appetite prompted or means of progression allowed. A lean, lone wolf with a festering fore-pad struck the trail and limped on at a steady, questing, three-legged trot, in hopes that the end of the matter might provide something toothsome. The rapid movements of parties of men had been known to have such an effect even at that time (as since).

But the chief watchers and followers had been the fowls of the air.

Every mountain peak had then, and many have still, a planetary system of birds of prey. In clear weather these swing in circles at unimaginable heights, scrutinising in turn every radiating glen, and remarking all that moves therein.

Yes, man and beast, each fly-tormented mule, new yeaned ibex kid, and German botanist climbing economically without a guide, is marked, scrutinised, summed up, and kept under day-long observation, and his probabilities of life assessed upon certain grim actuarial tables known only to the tribes who seek their meat from God. You had not thought it? You scarce credit it. "Have never seen them." *But they have seen you*, and in the Hautes-Pryénées, or the Atlas, your every

step has been marked from your rising up to your lying down.

Without counting the buzzards, which are chiefly concerned with mice, there are at least three kinds of watchers of the world below.

First, and most in evidence, is the griffon, a lordly creature to the eye, with vast, square-cut wings, and a small woolly head sunk into a snow-white ruff; a vulture he, with a vulture's appetite for carrion—and for nothing else. His interest in a man begins when that man is in the act of falling, and becomes urgent only in the case of the fall proving fatal.

The eagle is smaller, but more powerful; he, too, is a carrion feeder, but will carry off grouse, marmot, and red-deer calf. In hard weather Scottish eagles will pack and destroy a full-grown hind, whilst the larger race of Tibet is credited with killing wolf in fair fight. But the fear of man is on him—he learned it long ago, and there is no record of this bird attacking even a small boy. Sooth to say, he is both cowardly and stupid, though all-glorious to see.

Last and most formidable, because incalculable, is the great bearded vulture, or lammergeier

(the Gypaete of the Gavarnie Izard-hunters), a sly ruffian who makes up in brains what he lacks in weapons. This sort is as fond of carrion as the others, and has ways of his own for providing it.

The Master-Girl and her pursuers had not run three bow-shots before the eye of a watcher was upon them. By the time they had gone a mile, the whole planetary system of the nearest peak was disturbed; and before the girl had taken sanctuary, a ring of big birds was circling half a mile above her. This might mean business.

Her climbing was watched by the griffons without excitement; their turn might come later, but had not come yet; it was the bearded vulture which dropped out of the blue in bold spirals and marked the four humans disappear into that *cheminée*. Then, if a bird of prey ever swears, he swore, for a man climbing between the straight walls of a cleft is of no use to him.

When two bodies fell there was commotion; the griffons shut their wings and plunged two thousand feet in a few seconds, but clapped on the brakes and bore up again with the wind rattling in their great drab quills, for the bodies had not rebounded upon the scree, but lay close under the

rock—*where something else might fall.* Patience, brothers!

Moreover, there were two living figures yet upon that rock, and these the griffons held in fear. They climbed the sky again and waited on, wheeling narrowly and near.

Not so the bearded vulture, playing a lone hand and pursuing the traditional tactics of his race; he skimmed the summit of that *aiguille* and took stock of its capabilities. Two humans were still within the cleft. The upper was well sheltered from above, and on both sides. He turned short to keep her in his eye (a wicked crimson eye it was). At that moment she faltered, slipped, and was almost gone. Instantly he dipped and edged in, but she recovered herself; out he went again. Whilst turning he once more caught sight of the lower figure; he had lost it for a while. It had shifted, had emerged from the cleft, and was clinging to an exposed, projecting buttress, overhung from above, safe from a down-right stroke, but from a side-flick, eh?

The human moved slowly; it went short upon one of its fore legs; it seemed, and was, very lame, very tired, and unsure of its footing.

Meanwhile the two humans in question knew nothing of the scrutiny of which they were the subjects, being otherwise and fully engaged. Besides, griffons may guide a hunter to a kill, but signify naught else. The presence of the real danger had clean escaped them, for the bearded vulture is less given to soaring than to gliding along a cliff-face close in, ready for the emergencies of anything that moves thereon.

The light had begun to go; it was abominably cold; a flurry of small snow found its way into the cleft, and ran in little round dry pellets upon the naked back of the Master-Girl crouching for warmth like a hare in her form, and hugging herself against the strong shudders which ran through her. To have fought her battle and to have so nearly won, and to lose life, and all from such a childish blunder! If she had but the smallest of weapons, a skinning-knife, a bodkin, she would take her chance; but the bodkin had gone when the kaross went, and her knife had been wrenched from her hand when she struck. There was not one little wee loose stone within reach; she had tried them all, even to breaking her nails.

And that wretch, Low-Mah, down there, not

six bows' length away, lamed as he was, would be girding at her all the time, breaking off at whiles to work desperately at that crippling arrow. It was certainly loosening. One barb held; but such was the fellow's courage that he would tear it out yet, and then?

Until it drew he could not get back into the cleft, for his pinned-up hand was upon that side. When he rested from his bouts of self-torture he indemnified himself by assailing her with insults and taunts, governing his voice lest she should guess how far he was gone. She did guess, and with chattering teeth gave him fully as good as she took. It was very pitiful, inexpressibly vulgar, this nose-to-nose pitched battle of primeval Billingsgate. Lo, did ye think that passionate hate first found expression in our time?

He played upon her shaken nerves. Could she not see those child-eating boys, sitting at her either elbow, their reddened teeth a-work, click! click! To which sally Dêh-Yān, stroking her own hair and pointing down to his, rejoined that his scalp should hang from her belt ere night with the top-knots of the other two. "And, ah me! I have no knife, Low-Mah; shall I find it

under thine arm?—or am I to borrow thine for our little business?" with other like endearments. Pity them both.

In the middle of one of her *ripostes* the girl choked, for the last barb had given, his arm was free. Nodding to her mutely, for he was well-nigh sick with agony, the man brought his hand down; he stripped the feathers, biting the gut whipping, and took the barbs in his teeth; he had but to draw the nock through his forearm, and would be not only free but weaponed.

He drew inch by inch; it came; he had it in his hand. "Now, my Heart, I begin. Wait for me, my dove, my love! I am coming for thee!"

He shook the new snow from his ears, shifted his hold, lifted a foot, still grimly nodding his unspoken threat, and—next moment was reeling out into empty air, whilst a huge bird, which had dealt the buffet, staggered past and plunged, then opening wide wings regained its balance and swept short zig-zags down—down in pursuit of its falling booty.

But the Master-Girl beat her little fists upon the stone and wept. "I would have killed him yet!" she wailed in that bitterness of spirit which over-

comes the bravest when the ideal perfection of some all-but-achieved success has been marred at the ultimate moment.

It is always so in life. Napoleon, instead of yielding his sword to the conquering Briton, rattles off from his last battle-field in a well-horsed *calèche*. Nor did every French ship strike her colours at Trafalgar. Nor did the allies enter Sevastopol on the night of the Alma as they might so easily have done; nor did Kitchener catch the gallant and adroit De Wet.

Her chaplet lacked the full foliage that is accorded to the victor in fiction only.

Bear not too hardly upon her, ye who are proudly and perfectly straightforward in all speech and action, if I confess upon her behalf that in after life the Master-Girl made not quite so much of the bearded vulture's intervention as you might have done.

She had achieved an unheard-of and almost incredible feat, and knew it—but—(now came that deadly reaction!) the Shape— Strength was ebbing from her. Would her luck hold?

She had no fear of her feathered ally. Him, she, craning far over, had watched take seizin of

his kill, and then, as the light went suddenly, spread vast wings and racquet-tail and sail forth across the darkening scree and blacker forest-spires to some roosting cranny of his own.

Her knees gave way beneath her, her wrists jerked as she let herself down from ledge to jut, and from jut to cranny of that *cheminée* of death; her eyes were set in her head and her jaws cramped with a tongue-drying ague of fear of falling. In a word she was as nearly forespent as a girl of sixteen may be, and has a right to be, who has run as she had run, fought as she had fought, and fasted as she had fasted, and was still fasting.

At last (after what agonies of apprehension and endurance) the tension upon her fingers might be relaxed, for one foot was upon the first loose stone of the scree. Its fellow found something soft and chilly beneath it. At the touch of a dead enemy the Master-Girl's eyes were enlightened as if with food.

The rites of victory must be observed. She fell to, panting thickly as she cut and tugged, not for the horror of her task but from sheer exhaustion, and whilst arising to her feet to utter

the three whoops which the occasion demanded,[1] found her legs bending, and dropped asleep upon the stones between her silent foes. So have men fallen asleep upon the rack when the screws were eased.

But the Porter-Soul which seldom sleeps would allow her no long respite. Much remained to do, and was she not still in peril? Before long she suddenly threw the gathering snow off her and glanced around keenly. The night-wind blowing up the crevice was tainted with—what? Four green, shining eyes were watching her. She sniffed—"fox!" and contemptuously threw a stone, and, ere its rattle had ceased, felt her scalp crawl, for over the spruce spires travelled the drear, anti-human menace of the wolf.

Her Totem was obscured and for once seemed far, but there was another resource near at hand and familiar, if only—only—it were propitious! those malignant Boy-Ghosts whose jibbering squeaks and rustlings had added untold horrors to the last hour of her darkling vigil upon the ledge.

[1] Still given at the breaking-up of a fox, and more ceremoniously, with winded horn, as the *hallalai* at the death of the German stag.

These, for some cause, had spared her, might she not entreat their continued good-will? She had known and played with all three before her promotion to the tribal governess-ship; there was nothing between herself and the elder two; the eaten child did not count. Doubtless they would be hungry (Oh how her own vitals pinched!). Quick, then, an offering! Savagely, desperately she hacked the hands from Low-Mah, and (it had been impossible before her sleep) bestowed them upon a ledge some five bows' length up that dark ascent.

"Pen-noo!—Lab-go-nee!—here is meat!—See I bring you food!—I bring it in peril of my life! Ye, who kept yourselves from the grey wolf, *keep me this night!*"

She was down again and tore herself from the place. Partake she would not, though her nature cried out for food. A brave of her race would have had no qualms,—but a squaw?—No!

Weakly, and with her spirit riding her reluctant flesh as a ruthless rider urges a failing horse, did Dêh-Yān set her face upon that ghost-guarded journey up the valley, nor did wolf, lynx, or worse molest her.

Her foes were the tormenting thoughts which, vulture-like, wheel closely around a spirit encumbered by a weakened body.

Was it worth it? Her man had grown cold and silent and strange to her. Twice the agony of wounded affection superadded to crushing bodily fatigue brought her to a stand beneath dark boughs at some rougher gradient. Then with shut eyes and chin driven hard against a labouring bosom she fought it out. The nurse-spirit triumphed. "If I lie down and sleep here—I shall not awake again, and he—will die, or at best be a lame man for his life." Then, lifting her face again, she would draw a deep breath and set her jaw to endure the anguish of walking, and so, by a series of shortening spurts, reeling and rocking, she reached the foot of the face. But it was a dog-weary girl, without one spark of the pride of victory alight within her, who crawled in over the cave-sill.

CHAPTER VI

RENUNCIATIONS

AFTER the recital the woman flagged again, and presently could hardly keep her eyes open. At a sign from her man she lay down and was dead asleep almost before she had drawn up her knees in the posture assumed by the sleeping savage all the world over, the ante-natal position in which the pre-dynastic Egyptians buried their dead.

But Pŭl Yūn could not sleep. He had passed through every phase of mental agony; had spent a long day at the torture-stake of suspense and anticipation, and had been released from it to find himself confronted by a crisis in his domestic relations.

He understood only too well what had happened. Since the world and wiving began was there ever such a woman? Was there ever such a predicament for the husband of a woman? Use and wont

and the immemorial practice of his own, and all other tribes, had fixed the relative positions of the sexes. This man believed as firmly as did the Apostle Paul that the man was made first, and was the head of the woman, who was provided for him, for his comfort and use by his Goddess, the Sun, and over whom he, the man, was bound to exercise the rights of mastery and lordship to the very fullest extent. Whilst young and comely the wife was a valuable possession, but, when stringy, and past work and child-bearing, it had until recently been a question in times of scarcity whether she might not be eaten. That the Sun-disc Men had recently decided against the older use is a point in favour of the Sun-disc Men which we, their descendants, may score to their credit. The Fuegians, at the time of Charles Darwin's visit, still occasionally dined upon their grandmothers.[1] As to conceding to one of the subject sex equal rights, the thing was extra-revolutionary, it was indeed inconceivable, it was outside the region of discussion.

But, what was this that had happened? Here in this chance-begun housekeeping, the whole

[1] As you may read in *The Voyage of the "Beagle."*

matter had been turned topsy-turvy; the moccasins were on contrary feet; the hatchet was in the wrong hand. He had come out to capture a wife, and a wife captured him. He had broken his leg and she had mended it. Twice he had been attacked by a bear, and twice she (not he) had beaten it off, killing it—actually killing the monster,—at the second encounter (think of it!—who ever heard the like?). On that occasion he, the man, had borne himself stoutly, and as a brave; he had faced his foe axe in hand, without hope, and had made no moan, and would have taken his mauling, and his death, without a whimper. Thus had he preserved his self-respect, had participated in the fight, and had in some roundabout fashion come to persuade himself that the skin was his, and that the necklace of claws and teeth which was now around his neck had a right to be there. (It did not sit comfortably as yet, but comfort and assurance would have come in time, never fear. Did not the Prince Regent assert so frequently that as "Major Brown" he had fought at Mont St. Jean, that at length, as George the Fourth, his gracious Majesty related the story with embellishments at the Waterloo banquet and

appealed to Wellington himself for substantiation? "'T was I gave the order, '*Up Guards and at 'em!*' —*You heard me, Arthur?*")

Such, alack, is poor human nature in these latter days, nor was it more veracious in the days of ignorance.

Yes, Pŭl Yūn had begun to believe that he had killed that bear.

But who killed the three braves whose raw scalps lay upon the cave floor? Those three scalps were another guess matter, a different story altogether. There was no straight, or even plausible, manner of accounting for them. He saw no way of persuading himself now, or in the future, that he had had any hand in the taking of them.

In a word, they were his wife's, every single hair of them,—not his, alas, not his!

In a word, this poor ignorant savage man was all at sea in the lore of Modern Officialism,—the whole art of assumption was hid from him; by which I mean the mental and spiritual capacity to appropriate to one's own peculiar credit not only the results of another man's courage, luck, or capacity, but *the actual performance itself.* This

is the recognised modern practice. The pupil paints or plans, the master signs the drawings and takes the commission. The devil devils, the leader wins the case. The C. I. V. storms Baviaans-kloof, the alderman of his ward receives the war-medal. The Stunt-Sahib, squattering through bottomless mud, organises the new annexation, his chief down at the base under a punkah gets the thanks of the Governor General.

This is how we do it to-day. They did it otherwise in days when the All-Seeing Sun was believed to shine with approval upon the Sayer-of-the-thing-that-is, but to hide her face from the liar, and the sneak, and the tribesman who stole the axe or the honour of another.

So poor foolish Pŭl Yūn gnawed his knuckles for long dark hours wishing that his wife and he were dead, and but for a soul of goodness in things evil —a red savage, for one—might e'en have brought his wish to the birth by braining the woman as she slept and subsequently pitching himself off the crag. He dreed his weird for the lee-lang watches of the coldest and blackest night that ever he had known, colder and blacker than those which he had worn through after the breaking of

his leg, and before the Master-Girl had found and taken possession of him. He would say in the after years, and did plainly believe, that during that night-watch there were strange visitants to the cave: that two birds flew in out of the darkness and sat with him; the one upon his right hand was a ptarmigan of the scree, winter-white and soft, clucking sweet things, gentle things, about the sleeping girl. The one upon his left hand a raven of the cliff, blacker than the midnight or the shadows of the cave, croaking evil things, showing the poor, hardly-bestowed savage all the shame and the ignominy and the laughing scorn of the home-coming to his tribe.

But the longest and blackest of nights wears at last, and the dawn-streak shot aloft, and the cold grey peaks took fire and glowed like rosy brands amid the ash of a hearth; then, whilst the dawn brightened and the upper ranges were dyed a colour that had no name to the watcher, nor has gained one yet, for it is not the heart of a rose, nor saffron, nor salmon, nor hath it an earthly counterpart—it was whilst the heavens above him were declaring the glory of God and the firmament showing His handiwork, that the last struggle

took place, the tender clucking mastered the dull croaking: the raven stalked forth to the cave-sill and took wing adown the gulf of air; but thrice the little snow-white ptarmigan tossed himself aloft into the keen clear morning, and thrice he came circling down again to the cave-sill with stiffly bent wing and inflated throat singing his song of praise to the Lord who made and warmed him, and then he too was gone and the watcher was alone.

Then Pŭl Yūn, under the stirring of a new impulse, did a very strange and wonderful thing. Taking the trophy from his own neck he laid it across the throat of the sleeping woman. Her eyes opened, her hand went up, she felt, saw, and understood. She arose to her knees; a new and beautiful light was in her eyes, a great and pathetic awe had fallen upon her.

"No—thou shalt not do it!—No!—How shall my husband go home to his people bare-necked whilst his wife walks behind him wearing—these?"

"I—will!" groaned the man.

"You shall not,—you dare not, —you can not!"

"Be silent!—I say I will!" he groaned more harsh.

Catching up scalps and necklace she cast everything at his feet and bent grovelling before him.

"What are these to me?—I want but thee! But to a brave they are more than father, mother, wife, or life itself." She did not speak in scorn, but from what she had seen and known, yet it hurt.

"Stop,—cease, be still!" he cried abruptly and very fiercely, for how shall a man fight himself if his wife takes sides with his lower nature against the higher? The woman did not understand; she thought him enraged, she knew not why; but the jealousy which had poisoned their life for weeks past was cause enow. Plainly he must be humoured.

"That is right!—Be master!—What am I?—Thy slave and a Little Moon girl, no more. Thou hast never beaten me yet, beat me now!—take the things! Let us be as we were—Yes," with a dead-lift of self-renunciation, "I will break my bow!" She reached for the weapon where it lay, —what it meant for her only an inventor, and a successful inventor, can tell. To allay the unreasoning jealousy, the rooted conservatism of her husband, this red girl would have put out of her life the new thing that she had thought out,

brought to the birth, perfected, and tested at the risk of her very heart's blood.

As her hand closed upon the wood, a larger and stronger hand closed over both. Her lover silently drew her to himself.

CHAPTER VII

SHORT, SOMEWHAT DRY, BUT IMPORTANT

WE must compress into three or four pages the labours and results of four busy months during which by frequent experiment and incessant practice these two young creatures worked at, and worked out the mechanics of their discovery.

It was an opportunity of almost incalculable infrequency. Consider, I beseech you. Your savage, a man of a hunting tribe, lives normally from hand to mouth. Is game abundant and his hunting successful he gorges to repletion and sleeps long and heavily. Is food scarce he hunts the harder, sleeps lightly, eats sparingly, and has in prosperity no incentive, and in adversity no leisure for protracted and systematic experiment, even if he should find the impulse within himself, and be upheld by the applause and co-operation of his tribe.

It is doubtful if the combination of rare and

delicate qualities which go to the making of an inventor present themselves once in a thousand generations of savage men, and how much rarer still must be that general recognition from his fellows without which a savage can effect nothing permanent. Even the privacy, which is hardly less essential than sympathy for a tentative effort, is wanting, for a savage lives in public, and the initial failures of the inventor not seldom in our own times expose him to the pitiless raillery of his contemporaries, a blighting, sterilising ridicule to which the child-nature of primitive man was certainly not less sensitive than are the natures of monkeys, dogs, and children.

The steadfast mind that can ignore and outstay the gibes of neighbours is not too common to-day, and was probably very rare indeed in that remote and ancient world of which my tale tells.

That an armourer should work behind locked doors, and that it is folly to show unfinished work to a bairn are excellent adages. But savages are all bairns; indeed, among primitive peoples the environment is so unfavourable for invention that one might almost say that a savage never invents anything, and even in the case of his

stumbling upon a promising novelty, its unfamiliarity condemns it in the eyes of his comrades, if not in his own.

Only in the excessively rare event of a reforming chief can any advance be registered. And how seldom does such a prodigy arise! The stars in their courses fight against such an avatar! We, the English of the twentieth century, are, take us all round, as open to reason and as receptive to the new idea as any folk upon this earth, or any that ever trod it; what is more, we are accustomed to reforms, we await them with expectancy if not with equanimity, we know full well that certain of our venerable institutions stand in need of tinkering, but we never dream that the impulse shall come from above. A codifying, or land-transfer-simplifying Lord Chancellor, or a reforming or unifying Archbishop are incredible. The processes by which such men climb to their posts disable their minds from criticising a system which has justified itself in their persons. Nor is it likely that a sachem will be impatient of a state of affairs which has landed him at the summit of his ambitions. A Peter the Great comes but once in an æon.

Here, however, in this snow-bound glen, was just that assemblage of conditions which stimulate and protect the inventor whilst perfecting his invention. The store of frozen bear-meat secured leisure. There had been sufficient initial success to encourage continued experiment. The companionship of two united hearts provided the needful sympathy; nor was the touch of emulation wanting. The august mountains kept the ring, their snowy silence excluding the hee-haws of jealous ignorance.

Heavens, how these children worked! Size, material, method of use, the best position, trajectories,—everything was an open question; everything had to be mastered by trial, by competition, by comparison. Observe, there was absolutely no past, no tribal lore to handicap or guide. How they chattered! As to arrows, now,—should they head them with bone or with stone?—How fledged?—How straightened?—Of what length? This brought on the bow, its size, its weight, its parent tree; wych-elm, ash, or cornel?

Pŭl Yūn leaned to something small and short, handy for wood-work; but after being consistently

out-shot by longer weapons of the Master-Girl's choosing propelled by longer bow, gave way after some sulking.

He was by way of learning. And so was she, for never again during those four months did she shoot her best in his presence, or to his knowledge. Thenceforward she would essay her longest flights in private, and found that the extreme range which contented her man was far from being the limit of her own bow. But this knowledge she kept to herself.

Pŭl Yūn was as yet a poor walker, but his infirmity in no wise hindered his archery; rather did it help, in that it tied him to the butts. His industry, his zeal to excel were tremendous, and there was reason that he should toil terribly to perfect himself in this novel art before presenting himself again to his tribe. He had by now determined, at Dêh-Yān's earnest intercession, and as the reasoned result of a couple of months' watching of his shafts, to discard his spears. It was a momentous decision: who shall say what it meant to the war chief of a small tribe hard-pressed by stronger and better armed neighbours?

Conceive then, this human pair, mere young-

sters according to our reckoning, cut off from the world, applying every faculty which they possessed to the study of their art. Doubt not that when once they had come to an agreement as to details progress was consistent and rapid; and as week by week their smaller and yet smaller marks were stricken at lengthened ranges, their exultation rose and hardened to solid confidence.

So wore the days and the months of winter.

CHAPTER VIII

THE FLITTING, AND THE FORERUNNER

"DÊH-YĀN, we must be going!"

"And thy leg?"

"Ah, yes,—but, stronger or weaker, we must go, or there will be no legs of mine, or of thine, to go upon!"

"Dreams again?—That hare?"

The man nodded sagely and swept the white waste below the cave with apprehensive eyes. There was nothing to be seen. A delaying spring had hardly made itself evident at their height. The lammergeiers, in a cleft high overhead, were feeding a single clamorous youngster, a fat, downy chick, but the lammergeier lays its egg in the last days of the old year. The ravens were hard at work upon their nest, the wool was in (winter coat of stonebuck), the first green egg would be laid within the week, for February was wearing according to our modern calendar.

The stream had begun to trickle, the water-ousels were at work, but the larch was still untasselled, and not a flower had yet broken the snow crust, not even the fringed purple soldanella, or the small pale crocuses at the edges of the drifts. The passes would still be piled deep with soft new falls.

The crossing would be a desperate business as Pŭl Yūn knew very well. Such a feat had never been essayed so early within human memory; all crossings (and such were rare events) had ever been made in the late autumn when the snows were hard. Yet he was in a fever to be gone, and the woman knew why.

"Thy Little Moons will make an early start of it —some of them at least will be up here presently looking for their lost braves."

"I buried them deeply—many stones did I roll down over them," said the girl gravely, thinking her own thoughts.

"But, their dogs (good wolves) will find them, never doubt," remarked Pŭl Yūn. "It was bad luck, thy not killing their dogs the same night. Nay, I do not blame thee. Thou hadst run far and fast, and fought bravely, wonderfully; it

makes my heart laugh to think of one woman fighting three braves and bringing away their scalps. Yes, I own thou wast tired out. All the same it was against us, and is against us still, that those three dogs were left to gnaw through their leashes and get away down to the tribe masterless. They will be brought up again and laid on and followed, and if they do not own to the trails of their dead masters, they will own to ours, which is as bad for us. No, we cannot fight the whole of thy tribe, we must be moving, and at once."

This was final. Dêh-Yān, who had put in three whole days at arrow-making, arose with the last and finest specimen of the art in her hands. It was fledged with the white and black quills of ptarmigan and pointed with a keen splinter of bone. Holding the venomous looking thing between her hands by point and nock, she straightened a weary back and lifted it towards the young moon. "O Totem of my people and of me and of my New Thing, grant that this one at least of all my arrows may serve me at my need!"

They began their packing, a serious affair; their outfit must be cut down to the least, last ounce.

It must consist of just food, raw meat, their weapons, the bearskin to sleep in, and the trophies; no more.

Double moccasined they set forth clothed with deerskin leggings to the body, dividing the loads between them, an event significant and of the first importance in human history.

"We must march light," said Pŭl Yūn, and paused. Dêh-Yān frowned, set her mouth, and tossed from the cave-sill the hoard of rock-crystals, amethysts, and cairngorm as dear to a girl of the Magdalenian age as her diamonds to a bride of our own.

"This I will *not* leave," continued the man, nodding approval of the accomplished sacrifice of vanities. The thing reserved was the shoulder-blade of the dead bear upon which he, no mean draughtsman, had etched the story of the fight; yet, watching the resolution of his wife to disencumber herself, he presently cast down his achievement, and turned his back to it where it lay —yet, as we know, it was not lost. Did not the drip from the roof glaze it over and preserve it? Did not the wet flow up in which it lay enclasped and seal it down? Did not a sheet encrustation

from the roof fall and cover it, and finally in the fulness of time, did not the Professor come fumbling along and find it? And is it not to-day the especial glory and pride of a certain case in a certain University Museum?

He was minded to work up as high as his leg would carry him, and then, after a heavy meal, to make a night of it, coiled up with his wife in that thick, warm, capacious bearskin in a hole in a drift. "Walk whilst the light lasts and you can see your marks," was his rede. "Who knows what the weather upon the pass may be to-morrow?" It might well be that a "firn" from the south would be blowing on the col, and then they must just lie snug and sleep it out, yes, to the last strip of their meat, if needs were, for to face it would be—death!

Up they trudged, and up, and still up, bowed double beneath their burdens, occasionally stopping to straighten weary backs, always choosing the outcrops of bare rock where such trended upward, but for an hour on end sinking mid-thigh deep at every toilsome step in soft, new snow. The last of the trees was far below them; even the trailing pine and juniper had given out. They

were working up into their first cloud; below the ragged coldness of its moving edge Dêh-Yān turned and took her last look upon the country of her childhood and her folk. There was no regret in her heart, nor any love for any human creature whom she was leaving. Her father she had never known. He had perished young. (Most savages die young—hard is the life and heavy the mortality; the hunter-tribes barely keep up their stocks despite early marriage.) Her mother, whom she could just remember, was also dead. Her child-life had been made bitter to her by blows and grinding service rendered to gruff masters and shrewish mistresses. The small girl-child had struggled up; other children died, she survived, being one of the indestructibles, sharpened, hardened, toughened exceedingly by her environment. Such an upbringing, whatsoever else it may do, does not cultivate the affections. How jealous had she been of the boys! How she had despised the girls, her inferiors in speed and daring! When promoted to the post of Governess, how she had bullied her small charges!

No, she gazed with unshaken bosom and clear eye upon the valleys of her home. The last peep!

And there, miles and miles away, and, oh, so far beneath, was a something strung out across a snow-field, a something which would have escaped the best eye in a regiment of modern Alpini, a something which moved slowly, and was withal so faint and so far, that a strand of cobweb seen across a pane at the breadth of a wide room would be cable-broad compared with it. "Wah, we started none too soon," was Pŭl Yūn's comment, and, leg-weary as he found himself, he kept at it, butting away upward into cloud and falling snow so long as he was sure of his line, then, confident that the advance-party of the Little Moons, supposing that they had got upon the spoor, and meant sticking to it, would not have daylight to make it good, he bored into the lee-side of a big drift, throwing out the loose snow behind him like a dog, and invited Dêh-Yān to accept it as a camp.

Dêh-Yān disliked the idea of camping in the presence of pursuit, but she saw that her man had marched as far as he was able. Moreover, he was now in his element; a brave who had been a member of four war-parties had a right to his opinion as to what other braves would or would not

do. "They will follow on to the edge of the cloud," said he. "Above that the new fall will cover our sign, not wholly, but enough to make them call off the dogs when the sun sets. And we—we will be up and off before She rises to-morrow. And I say, Dêh-Yān, I do not like those good wolves of thy people."

"Nor I—and if they follow on?"

"They won't. They are wholly out of their country, and I am nearing mine, and have travelled this road before, which none of them have, as I think—at least none that returned."

"That is so," assented Dêh-Yān. "When I was quite little, two of our young men tried this pass. They never came back. Tell me," she went on, snuggling down into the bearskin, and feeling the blood begin to move again in her toes. "What brought thee over this awful road?"

"I was out for a wife.

"But were there no girls in the tribes south of thee that thou didst take this high white path?"

"Oh, yes, there are girls everywhere, but the tribes to the south of the Sun-Men, the Hawks and the White Wolf people, are so much stronger than we, that we have had to give up going to

them for wives. It was our braves who never came back from those journeys."

"Oho! those tribes would not be braver, I think? then, how?"

"They have an all-year-round camp close to the best quarry of weapon-stone. They have many slaves at work doing nothing else but axe-making and so are better armed than we. Also they stockade their camps. There is no getting in or getting out of their villages. I think our bows will surprise them." He added, "And now, if thou hast eaten all thou canst, go to sleep. I shall watch, or rather lie awake and listen."

Pŭl Yūn had out-marched his pursuers, but he had over-marched himself. The pride of manhood kept him going; the same pride forbade him to acknowledge his terrible weariness, but his wife was not deceived.

"I will watch first," she had said, and had insisted upon taking a last look round their hiding-place before turning in. Upon her return she found, as she had anticipated, that her man was sunk in the deepest sleep that nature knows. The Master-Girl nodded, built herself a line of marks, slight,

but sufficient, and glided off into the snow-lit night silent as an owl.

At midnight Pŭl Yūn turned himself and woke with a sense of something lost. He was alone. For some moments his locality, and his very individuality escaped him, so deeply had he plunged, then both returned.

"Dêh-Yān, come in here, it is my watch," he whispered, but there was no reply. The man peered forth into the darkness, and got to his feet armed. His wife was gone. He listened. The night was thick and still; what wind was blowing came up the pass from the glen which they had left. It was bitter cold. Suddenly, from down the pass came one small sound, slight and keen as the squeak of a bat, but it was not the squeak of a bat, and Pŭl Yūn felt the hairs creep upon his neck, for it was the shrieking yelp of a wolf. Now a wolf is an animal which hunts and lives in a society of its own, a society which has common needs, and co-operates in its enterprises. Hence wolves have a multiplicity of cries with which to express their wants and intentions, and many of these were known to Pŭl Yūn from childhood. But a wolf, though a villain, is no coward, and rarely,

most rarely, expresses pain. As a rule, when trapped he dies mute. What meant that single piercing yelp? To the ear and trained imagination of the woodlander it signified a spasm of surprise, despair, disappointment, and grief. It was a call to the pack, "*To me, my comrades, Haro! I am betrayed!*"

That his wife's hand was in it Pŭl Yūn never doubted, but how deep was her hand in it? and could she withdraw that hand? To have left him asleep and gone off upon a lone hunting at midnight was—it was—*like her!* But, it was hard upon him, very hard.

He took his weapons, axe and knife—for of what service are arrows in a midnight?—and moved in the direction of the cry. Within a few strides he stumbled upon the first of her marks, then upon a second, later upon a third. This, then, was no unpremeditated escapade; no, like everything else which she did, this foray towards the camp of the pursuing enemy was a thought-out business.

The snow creaked, something was coming. A quick, light breathing, a swift foot, Dêh-Yān was upon him, had caught him silently by the arm, had turned him, and was urging him to his top

speed. He raced beside her obediently in blind faith; she smelt of wolf and of blood. There was a cry of wolves behind them as they ran, but Dêh-Yān was laughing. The cry, mingled with the shouts of hunters, rose to a crash.

"That is the last of it—they have come upon my kill, and are baying upon the blood. They can carry the line no farther."

She was right, the fierce, wild clamour rose and fell and rose again, but was stationary.

"But we must be upon the trail. There is no room here for thee and for me." The Master-Girl was speaking with quick decision; her husband listened, guessing wildly; they had picked up the marks, had found the snow-camp; she was refolding the bearskin; he gathered his own affairs and followed her.

"Whither? Thou hast never been this way before, and even I am unsure of our road in this thickness and mirk."

"*Anywhere* is good—it is sheer death to loiter. We must risk everything upon speed and the chance of a further snowfall. Run thy best now, I will tell thee more to-morrow."

Hours later in the first grey of a wintry dawn

they had halted and dug themselves a second cave. This time they both snuggled within it, and sat panting and weak, listening for sounds of pursuit, and hearing only the ghostlike cackle of the mountain choughs at play amid cloud and falling snow overhead. They had got to their farthest; if followed up and found now they must die. Rest and sleep and food were imperative claims which would take no denials. Snow was falling, they had still a chance. They ate and slept and were not interrupted.

They awoke in an unknown world, small flakes fell steadily and straight, no wind breathed, there was no sun or sign of sun; it was one whiteness of diffused light in which the sense of direction was defeated.

They sat close as snowbound hares and munched bear-meat, Dêh-Yān telling her story between the mouthfuls.

"After I mounted guard it came to me that my people—I mean the Little Moons would never have come up so high so early in the season for game. It is no winter-hunting that we saw below us at the edge of the cloud, it is a war-party, and they mean scalps. Also, it seemed to me, even at that

distance, I could make out Good Wolf with them."

"Good eyes thou must have!—but, go on."

"Now it came to me that with Good Wolf they could not very well lose our trail, and being on the war-path, all braves too, and marching light, we should not be able to outmarch them, burdened as we are, and—and——"

"And—and—" mimicked the husband, "my wife did not wish to leave her skin behind, eh?"

"We find it useful, thou and I, warm too," murmured the wife, drawing the deep-piled pelt around her lover and burying her own nose in the soft fur. "But it was not for this skin only, but for two others for which I was taking thought."

"They are not so furry, those two," chuckled Pŭl Yūn, pinching her.

"It seemed to me," resumed the Master-Girl sedately, "that if it were a war-party of braves, with Good Wolf, too, our chance was bad, unless ——"

"Unless someone somehow foiled our sign?" whispered the man ponderingly. "But how?"

"That was the question. I went down to their camp and made friends with the first good wolf

that came up to me. There were others, but they were curled up each with his master, this one was the only watch they had set. I listened, I saw. Then I was for coming away, for ten braves and as many good wolves are bad company for one girl. But the getting away again was not easy. Gow-Loo's good wolf (I knew him, and he me) was suspicious. He walked around my knees so closely I could hardly move my feet. I could not speak to him for fear of rousing the camp. At last, when he had licked my hands, I got him to let me out and to follow. When I had led him a good way, and he was upon my hatchet-hand, and a little in front of me, I killed him. I had not meant him to have spoken, but the light was bad and he was very quick. It took me two strokes. The rest thou knowest."

Pŭl Yūn did know that his wife had run a frightful risk, and that once again her foresight and cool courage had brought her through. What he did not know was that she owed her life to the fact that her dead enemy's wolf, or wolf-dog, was still ignorant of the art of barking and had met the night-comer to his master's camp in the silent fashion of his wild parents. But, the wonder of

it! His inmost heart told him that this adventure would have been beyond him: he would not have risked the certainty of being pulled down by wolves, good or bad, and taken from them by their masters to dree a crueller ending at the stake.

Meanwhile snow fell steadily for a day and a night. The fugitives sat close and contrived to keep themselves warm, but their stock of food, howsoever well husbanded, was running out. Their position was already critical, presently it might be desperate, but they were spared the pangs of indecision or of divided counsels. Both recognised that their very lives depended upon doing nothing. To exhaust their bodily heat by struggling in deep new drift would be madness. And whither? Their last mark was lost, they knew not north from south, whilst the snow continued falling. No, they must sit it out, even if they starved where they sat.

By the evening of the third day the last of the meat was gone. They were huddling in silence, having discussed the question of eating their leggings and moccasins on the morrow, and agreed to refrain.

"For," said Pŭl Yūn, "we could never get

away from this snow-camp without our leg-gear, so we may as well starve clothed and with a hope in our hearts, as starve two days later half-naked with none." And to this the Master-Girl had agreed.

But the situation was far from cheerful and did not conduce to much conversation.

"Hark!—what is that?"

"Hush, on thy life, hush!—we are well hidden."

During their headlong flight from their first halt, and in the course of the various doublings and subterfuges by which the fugitives had hoped to break the continuity of their trail and baffle their pursuers, these youngsters had most effectually lost their bearings. This, their second, and which threatened to prove itself their final camp, was excavated in the side of one among many round-topped drifts which studded a level plain, or what seemed such, for its limits were hidden; it was probably the frozen surface of some small lake, or such another expanse as the Andermatt valley, a green and pleasant place in the summer months, upon which several lateral glens converged, a haunt of the mountain bison and the

tall, wide-antlered stag, but in winter a dreary waste avoided by man and beast.

Yet, something was approaching, for the snow, frozen crisply by the evening's chill, crunched beneath heavy feet. There was the deep, rhythmical panting of a huge body labouring hugely. What on earth might this be? Four thoroughly frightened human eyes peered forth from the spy-hole left at the mouth of the snow-cave, and beheld—What think ye? A great, bald, black block of a head, maned at the temples and nape and hung with a pair of shield-shaped hairy ears, was butting through the drifts. A coil of bristly trunk was stowed away between a pair of prodigious tusks which showed yellow amid the whiter snows around them. They were as stout as young beeches and curled upon themselves in such wise that their points were useless to the monster who bore them. This had probably been his downfall; some younger rival with shorter weapons, shorter and lighter, but with points which could be brought to bear, had ousted this patriarch from the herd. Here was a rogue mammoth upon his travels, setting the height and width of a mountain range between himself and the scene of his disgrace, a

Napoleon on his way to St. Helena, diswived, discrowned, a tragedy of brute existence. The great heart was hot within him, he was boiling to avenge his wrongs upon the first creature that he might meet, and meantime was working off his fury in tempestuous exertions. What was a fifty- or sixty-mile march to the enormous sinews of limbs seasoned by migrations and combats of a hundred and fifty years? His breath smoked around him as he forged his way along, now pawing the snow under him, now wallowing over it, using his huge belly as a raft.

Evidently he had fought his fight to a finish, had bellowed, butted, and thrust at some more adroit or better-armed youngster (some youth of seventy or eighty summers, maybe), who had worn him down and worsted him, and now, with such holes and rents in his shaggy sides as would have been death to any smaller beast, and were gruesome to see, he had relinquished the partners and pastures of his lusty prime, and was a wanderer upon the face of the earth until death—death which would from henceforth ambush his path and his lying down, for no keenly-interested wives would henceforth watch over his safety. No,

with yearly waning powers he must stave off doom as he might, but come it would at length, a grisly onslaught of a horde of lions, a staked pitfall, a snow-hidden morass.

Dêh-Yān shuddered at the sight of his small, red, wicked eye.

"If he gets our wind!" she whispered, in the ghost of a pixie's whisper, and was well pinched for the indiscretion. The giant did not get their wind, he had something else to think of. When he paused for breath close to their cave, they could see the great wall of hairy side twitching with the smart of the raw gashes with which it was scored, the records of that desperate and final conflict, for it is the law of the elephant herd that a dethroned master bull shall never re-try the issue: once down he is an outcast for the rest of his life, and a terror to the twentieth-century jungle, as his collateral ancestor, the rogue mammoth, was to the bleak tundras and mountain forests which were his home in the age of ice.

It was their first sight of a mammoth—the great beasts were already a dwindling race in the times we tell of, the days of the Magdalenian men.

Presently the silent watchers beheld the great

panting hero get his breath and resume his travels. Ploughing, heaving, wading through the snow, he faded from sight and silence followed.

"This may be just the luckiest thing in the world for us," said Pŭl Yūn, "or on the other hand, the unluckiest."

"Um, yes," assented the Master-Girl, thoughtfully, peering forth upon the trail which the passing monster had left. "If he is marching by himself we can take the same line, there is no losing *that* spoor. He knows the way, be sure of that, and where he can go we can follow—but, he leaves a blood-sign behind him, see!—If a party of tigers or of grizzlies strike that trail they will follow it upon the chance of finding the bull in some drift. Or, those Little Moon braves might happen upon it, eh?"

"In any case we must lie close for to-night—no more dark marches for me!—and if the morning shows that the bull is travelling unattended, we will use his trail."

"I begin to think we shall do it after all!" smiled Dêh-Yān, a little grimly, perhaps, for though she had kept a stiff mouth all day, the prospect was not encouraging, and she, at least,

had no local knowledge to fall back upon even if the weather should take up and let them through.

Fortune smiled upon the youngsters. Morning-light showed them the mammoth-track skinned over with a film of new snow unprinted by the spoor of beast or man. The fall had ceased, the drifts, ploughed through and pressed down by the bulk and weight of their forerunner, gave easy passage; something in the contours of the ground seemed familiar to Pŭl Yūn, who took the lead, silently, striding ahead with confidence, and presently, suddenly, the change came, the slope eased off, and the glory of the prospect before her rushed to the eyes of the girl who had been toiling up the last ascent bent beneath her load. She had never been so high before, nor overlooked such an extent of country. It caught her breath.

"Oh, what wide place is this!—And all the hunting-grounds of our people?"

"Not the twentieth part of it!" growled Pŭl Yūn with a frown. "Have I not told thee how narrow our ground is, and that it grows narrower?"

The Master-Girl sucked in her lips and re-shouldered her pack. "Let us be getting down to

them," she said shortly, then, half to herself, "Narrow or broad there shall be room enough for one Little Moon woman—and her bow! But, O, Pŭl Yūn, when thou hast found thy folk, do not quite forget poor Dêh-Yān."

The man fell back a stride and went beside his wife for a while in silence, albeit the going was so good that speech had been easy whilst in Indian file. It came home to him how bitter is the lot of the newly-caught slave-wife among the older women of the tribe to whom her ignorance, youth, and foreignness are subjects for ill-natured merriment and opportunities for spite.

"There shall be no breaking-in for my wife," he said. "Listen!—To-morrow night thou shalt sit upon that bearskin in my chief's presence. I have said it!"

And all this fuss about crossing one of the lower cols!

Wait, my friend. These young people had neither guides nor porters, nor maps, compass nor rope, nor ice-axes, nor well nailed, water-tight boots, appointments which make a fairly simple thing of what were otherwise a perilous feat. Moreover this was very early in the season, a time

of year when every week makes a difference. The writer of this veracious history of the Old Time has himself seen the farm folk in a Pyrenean glen leave their hay to run shouting at the first tourist of the season who had news of their friends on the other side of the pass.—And that was in May.

Nor were the Alps of that Old Time just as we see them to-day. I grant you they had come down in the world since their first glorious Himalayan youth; they no longer towered thirty, thirty-five thousand feet above the sub-tropical *terai* interspersed with its chain of salt lakes which we now know as the Mediterranean. The worst of the Great Ice Age was over, that grievous time when half the waters of the oceans were piled in a solid cap around the northern pole, a cap which extended southward in such sort that in Britain everything north of the Thames, and upon the mainland all that is now Germany and Austria, was sealed down beneath a solid sheet which was not melted for twenty thousand years on end. During this time, and for long after the worst of it was over, the Alps and the Tyrol were in process of being ground down to something approaching

what we see to-day. Their soaring peaks had arrested the cloud-systems of central Europe, and turned France into an arid steppe, the grazing-ground of countless herds of wild horse and gazelle, the clouds had deposited themselves in snow, the hoarded snows had ground down the sides of the giants, pared away their summits, and crawled out half across Lombardy in glaciers, which, when they finally receded, left trails of rubbish thirty miles long, spoils filched from the heights behind them.

The worst of this was over. The Rhone Glacier had dwindled somewhat, but still blocked the Wallis. For many generations the shores of the Mediterranean had been peopled in winter by tribes which had each its summer hunting quarters in this or that glen of the hinterland; tribes which had but little knowledge of, and no intercourse with, the people upon the southern side of the chain in the glens which feed the headwaters of the Po.

How should they have had?—I am telling a tale of the long ago; much water has run under the bridges since, both those of Avignon and those of Padua, and every gallon of it brought

down something from the southern Alps; hence, as nothing rolls uphill, the passes century by century have been growing lower than they were when our two youngsters essayed their adventure.

CHAPTER IX

THE HOMECOMING

IT was evening; the men of the Sun-disc Clan had returned from their hunting and fishing. The women and children were squatted about the fires. A clear, peculiar outcry broke from the girl in the tree-top, the watch-woman; just such a cry comes from the sentinel bird of a flock of feeding wild-fowl. The whole community was upon its feet in a moment, peering under arched hands.

Afar off against the yellow side of a dry gully of the foothills which arose between the last of the chestnut forest and the first of the spruce were to be descried a couple of moving specks.

They, whoever they might be, were miles away: made visible for a moment by the chance of their crossing a bare rock-face which had caught the last of the sunlight, thrown up distinctly against this ruddy yellow background and defined by the

magical clearness of an open sunset following a day of rain.

The braves handled their assegais awaiting the word of the Old Chief, a ring-man who had taken his first scalp forty years before and wore the necklace of five bear's claws which testified to participation in a later and yet sterner fight. He gave no order and kept his eyes upon the moving specks.

These had dipped into a hollow. "They have seen our smokes," said he. "If they are friends they will come right on, if they are unfriends they will not show again and the young men must deal with them to-night."

"Who but unfriends would come from that side?" asked a very tall young brave. There was a touch of covert insolence in the tone although the question was natural enough.

The speaker was a person of some consideration, for when he spoke others held their peace and listened (watching still, be sure),—he was one Honk-Ah, a great-nephew of the Old Chief, a man of notable activity and more ambition; one who aspired to the deputy chieftainship; an aspiration which had been kept in check for two years past by the presence of his cousin Pŭl Yūn, a brave

equally active and more popular, less subject to fits of disfiguring passion; a man marked out for leadership as well by his birth—being grandson to the Chief regnant—as by his qualities.

But Pŭl Yūn had been absent more than six moons, and during the past winter, as the Old Chief grew stiffer with the rheumatism which is the worst evil of the Northern savage, more dreaded than most forms of death, this youngster had waxed insolent at times; each recurring attack of lumbago might be the last, the one which would tie the old leader into his final knot, reducing him to a helpless, querulous cripple, and leaving the chieftainship open to the bravest and strongest man of his race.

The Chief ignored the question, he was at gaze: yes, the strangers had come into view again, were holding a right line towards the camp-smokes, there was no affectation of concealment, no ruse. Who might they be?

Said the sentinel-girl at length, "These are two braves, for they go side by side at times. One is shorter than the other by a head. Both are carrying something,—spears, I think,—and other things —robes."

Said the Old Chief's Head Wife in the spirit of prophecy, "It is my grandson!"

"And the little one, the other?" asked Honk-Ah, raising a doubt which no one was as yet in a position to allay.

There is but little twilight south of the Alps: it was in a thick green dusk that the all-but-given-up Pŭl Yūn strode back into camp with his shorter companion going beside him as an equal and a friend goes. No man of their tribe this;—who then?—a slave? No—*a squaw!*

The two, stepping out strongly (they had kept a trot for the avenue), made straight for the teepee of the Old Chief, and saluted the father of the tribe before exchanging a word with any. They also saluted the Head Wife, some word of petition and consent passed in dumb show, the skin that hung over the entrance was shifted, in they went, and the show was over.

But not the talk. It has been said that the old English manorial system assumed that every person in the village was intimately acquainted with the habits, business, and doings of every other person in the village (one might assume the same of villagers to-day with but little injustice). This

rule held among those earlier communities from which the mediæval Englishman was remotely descended. Everybody was enormously and unblushingly inquisitive. Why should he not be? When his body was satisfied he had nothing else to think about save the goings-on of his comrades. Hence he (and she) knew to a nicety the precise distance which so-and-so could jump, or swim, or throw; knew the last, least intimate fact about the bodies and minds, the personal peculiarities and habits of each and of all of the tribe, for—and bear this in mind, ye who travel in tubes and have the day mapped out and guarded for you—ignorance of some small particular might at any moment cost life itself.

Your savage is incessantly hunting and being hunted. At any moment in his day his dinner may jump up in front of him and run away. At any moment a huge tawny cat may claim him for her meal. At any moment he may find a spear sticking in the calf of his leg. Such possibilities are calculated to develop the faculty of attention: from his childhood up he is trained by the hard facts of his life to be as observant as a magpie and as pertinaciously inquisitive as a dog.

And this, methinks, is the place to introduce, an I durst, an excursus upon the Decay of Curiosity, a fine and tempting subject. There can be no sort of doubt that this is one of the Vanishing Instincts (the senses of locality and smell are others). The adult male European has very little curiosity, if of a fairly good stock and breeding, none at all. His wife, her maid, and the children of both sexes have traces of the faculty more or less pronounced as being some degrees nearer to the savage. (I prithee madam, thump me not, I speak but the naked truth!) If the antique instinct reappears at intervals, as in Spy-manias, Dreyfus-obsessions, and what-not, in modern France, it is less terrible than in that recent past which saw their Law of Suspects and our Popish Plot, and earlier Witch-baitings. Across the Atlantic the defect is less noticeable, indeed one of the less endearing characteristics of Cousin Jonathan is that insatiable and unabashed curiosity which, whether it make for righteousness or no, is the making of the Yellow Press.

With us English the primæval safeguard has almost lapsed. We pride ourselves upon an incurious optimism, the outcome of urban sur-

roundings and long internal peace. Are they yelling murder next door? Let them yell, 't is no affair of ours; it does n't do to interfere—leave it to the police. We have fifty little apothegms to excuse our cowardice or sloth. It has come to this, that every time we find ourselves at war (we are still somewhat pugnacious), it takes the average man of us from six to twelve months to get himself back into the sensitively-apprehensive, warily-cautious skin of his forefather to whom a condition of warfare was normal, who carried a weapon as we carry an umbrella and distrusted every bush. Some of His Majesty's forces never do regain a reasonable and saving curiosity; middle-aged general officers, especially those who have hung about Windsor and done much reviewing, practically never. This sort go into action wearing white plumes, and insist upon being followed by a mounted orderly with a red-and-white guidon upon his lance. These are they who throw six shells at a wooded height at five miles' range and pronounce it "unoccupied"; who excuse outpost duty on Christmas Eve "as a treat to the men"; who reduce their superiors to despair, their subordinates to stupor, the operations to a stand-

still; and who, when sent home as incapable, arouse society and the Houses upon their noble behalf, and assure the smoking-rooms of the clubs that the Service is ruined.

Many a town-bred private is in his own way as deficient: he makes haste to lose his regiment upon the march, also himself; then, if it be night, in place of effacing himself and using his wits and his ears, he will strike a match, and the better to advertise his presence, sings for company, being a secret believer in "things in the dark," but an arrant agnostic as to the "hen'my bein' hanywheres abart." Thus poor Tommy knows not that doom hath gone forth until he finds himself being held down and vivisected by the Afridi knife; or, with better luck, stripped by a Dutchman of every rag that covers him.

All which makes most unpleasant reading, but, I put it to you, is it not true?

Agreed then, we have pretty well parted with the acute and rational curiosity which was the first armour of our race.

But the Sun-disc folk had it in a highly specialised form, and by the time that that deerskin *portière* had ceased swinging behind the newcomers,

they had noticed much, and had actually deduced a good deal of the recent histories of Pŭl Yūn and his companion, from a stick here and a bundle there, a limp and a side-glance, momentary impressions in the dusk.

"He goes short upon his left leg, and it is no strain," said Honk-Ah.

"He has not gone short of meat,—see how heavy he is! Who ever saw a brave come home from a winter-hunting, or a wife-hunting in such case? La, we were worn away to sinew and bone at our last war-party; but, he—!" said an older man, a man of experience, with appropriate gesture.

"But his squaw!" said the women; "to let the Thing walk beside him!—and to hold her head up so! Why, when my man brought me into camp my hands were tied behind my back!"

"And mine," said another, "and my head was broken too, for my man stands no nonsense, I tell you!"

"A broken head," laughed a third. "It was nigh a broken back in my case. I mind me he laded me down with every single thing he owned and strutted before me like a blackcock in lekking

time! Oh but was n't I proud of him! Fine and mannish he looked when I could get a peep at him, for my head was bent to my knees with my load and the sweat was running into my eyes, I tell you! Ha!" The speaker laughed at the remembrance, just as a prefect chuckles over the lammings he took when a fag.

"Eh, but what in the world will this mean?" cried all together. "He has divided the loads, and she was carrying—*what*?—It can never be a bear-skin, the thing is plainly impossible. And—look at those silly bags of little feather-ended sticks! and the long ash-sticks!—What foolishness is this?"

"The young chief is no fool."

"They walked well, anyhow."

"Pride, mere pride,—they were ready to drop. Could not ye see as much? Think, they are in full winter dress: heavy deerskin leggings and karosses and all; 't is plain they have come from high up, somewhere—not over the pass, that is impossible for another three moons yet; they will have felt the heat cruelly all day."

"A likely-looking girl,—a Little-Moon girl by her gait and colour,—but where can he have picked her up?—and where has he been all this

while? A brave can't live upon snow, and he has lived well, and upon an enemy's ground. Wah, Pŭl Yūn is a wise man in some ways,—but a fool in others. He must be mad to set so much by an unproved squaw."

"He has had six months of her in my view," said an old woman, "and, right or wrong, Pŭl Yūn ever knew his own mind."

"She has bewitched him—he is mad, mad!" muttered Honk-Ah morosely, who saw his deputy-chieftainship slipping through his fingers after seeming safe in hand. The man was not a politic man (from the modern standpoint he was but a youth), he was a jealous fellow and wont to strike first. It seemed to him that this was his opportunity. He loafed around talking to those whom he believed to be in his interest, in undertones at first, then more loudly. "Who is she?—a Little Moon? But that story will not do, for there are none of that tribe on this side of the ranges, and he cannot have passed the ranges this spring. Where has Pŭl Yūn been?"

This was Mystery the First, an offence in itself in a community which has the right to know the most intimate facts of the life of each of its

members. Mystery breeds suspicion and suspicion leads up to distrust and hate. But in the heart of Honk-Ah hate was already full grown.

"There is something here that the tribe should know"; he spoke aloud and his voice carried far. "It seems to us that the Sun-Folk should be told, and told this night, where a brave has been harbouring who has been away, and on an enemy's grounds, for six moons."

"Also," said a young blood who was of Honk-Ah's hunting party, "we would see more of this squaw whom he brings into camp,—or who brings him." A laugh. "Our brother Pŭl Yūn went forth for a wife" (the word had the secondary meaning of female slave), "but has come back with a master." More laughter.

The silence within the Old Chief's teepee was unbroken for a while, and when the hanging *portière* moved it was shifted with the utmost deliberation. The Old Chief himself came forth followed by Pŭl Yūn. The elder spoke.

"My young men are noisy to-night. It is not good. My grandson has brought home a wife. He has done well. I say it. Is my nephew's heart black because he has no wife? The passes

were open last autumn for him as for my grandson. Let him make his heart white or go forth upon his wife-hunting so soon as he chooses."

"The passes are not open—" interposed Honk-Ah insolently.

"The passes are open to a brave with a big heart,—or for the matter of that to a brave with a squaw's heart," riposted the Old Chief severely. "My grandson crossed yesterday; his wife crossed with him."

There was silence, an astounded silence. Honk-Ah felt himself slipping: he must make a push for it. He spoke.

"We do not believe—" he began, but the Old Chief cut him short:

"*I* believe, and that is enough for my people. And, listen to me, Honk-Ah, and you who side with him, for I know what is in your hearts: this thing shall come to a head, it shall cease, and at once. My grandson Pŭl Yūn was War-Chief when he went forth. Is he weaker, or less brave, or less cunning since he has returned?"

There were mutterings in the darkness. Pŭl Yūn stepped to the front and spoke; very gently he spoke, but they knew him.

"It is two years since I beat my cousin at the spear-throwing. It has always been the law that one trial is enough. The tribe cannot be always changing its War-Chief. But I will put the law out of the question for once, for it is not well that the Sun-Folk should be under a War-Chief who is weak of hand, or whom they think is weak of hand. The matter shall be retried. At sunrise to-morrow, as soon as there is full light, let Honk-Ah be ready with his spears and I will be ready with mine. And the man of us two who can throw farthest, and make his point go deepest, he shall be War-Chief. I have said."

"It is good," assented Honk-Ah, who had got what he was playing up for, an early trial.

The deerskin shook, the Old Chief and Pŭl Yūn had returned to the teepee. The knot of mutineers moved slowly off conversing in muttered undertones.

"That is a point to me," said Honk-Ah. "He is fat, he is slow. He was sweating as he marched in, I saw it. And, *he carried no spears.* I know every assegai of mine by name, and they know me. To-morrow I win!"

CHAPTER X

THE SPEAR-THROWING

THE scene with which the last chapter closed had come as a not unwelcome interruption to a family explanation which had been in progress within the deerskin hangings of the Old Chief's teepee.

A mother-in-law may be a delightful person or the reverse. The difficulties and temptations which beset her position are of no modern creation. Are there not ancient wheezes upon this topic in Greek anthologies? I doubt not that these hoary japes were in their day and generation rehashes of Mykenæan jibes still more venerable, for under given circumstances we humans act alike all the world over, and there is no valid reason for assuming that our behaviours and misbehaviours have varied to any great extent during the past hundred thousand years.

Listen to a case in point. A friend of mine with

a faculty for getting into and out of places the most tight and remote once found himself for a whole month dependent upon the hospitality of an African tribe so degraded as to have lost (if it had ever possessed) the art of hut-building. These simple aborigines erected little shelters of small brushwood to windward and slept thereunder. They wore no garments, not even the most exiguous. A rough man, a coarse man, in such company would have discerned nothing but the brutality which he brought with him. He would have mishandled the situation from the first, and having presently reduced his position to an impossibility, would have taken himself off and returned (with luck) to civilisation with a story of beastly savages, less than half human, no better than the dog-faced baboons of the cliffs.

Not so my friend, who, being an English gentleman of the best type, had no difficulty in adapting himself to the necessities of a novel situation. He took to his hosts, they reciprocated, and he enjoyed the unique opportunity of being admitted to the inner life of a singular and interesting community. He watched and remembered. Among other matters he observed that *the ladies*

of this little people had several of the habits, mannerisms, and small personal traits of their sisters in good society.

Back to my tale. One of the little ways of mothers-in-law, even of mothers-in-law of family, is to assume a large degree of ignorance upon the part of the bride, and to gently (but firmly) initiate her into the right ways of doing things, and the relative positions and status of the persons of her new circle. I put it diplomatically. I have not used the word "encroach." I have known a bride return from her honeymoon to find *all* her bride-cake cut up and distributed.

But, conceive the claims of a grandmother-in-law, who was also Head Wife of the Chief Regnant, a woman of advanced years, of the firmest character, and not unaccustomed to implicit obedience.

This old lady was a rather terrible old lady, and no fool. She detected a Little Moon woman at a glance, as she was likely to do, being a Little Moon woman herself who had come over the pass forty years before with her elbows shackled and a bruise upon the top of her head as big as a fresh-water mussel. Hence a woman of the clan into which she had been born was a quite unmysterious

creature, about which she had, as she conceived, nothing to learn. She was for undertaking the usual breaking-in forthwith.

But her grandson Pŭl Yūn would have none of it. Mildly, but with absolute decision, he postponed the business. "No, my wife shall sit in my presence,—yes, at my desire. Also, she shall eat with me. It is unusual, I admit, but such is our rule. You do not understand? That too I admit. I am hoping to make things plain presently, but we must start fair, start as we mean to go on. In one word my wife is a Very Great Medicine. I have brought her a long way through deep snow, she is tired. I do not wish her to stand any more to-night, or answer questions. To-morrow perhaps. In the meantime, feel this—" the man extended his leg. "It was broken, as thou canst feel; she—my wife there—mended it. I lay more than a whole moon in her hands. She found me so; she left her tribe to come to me; she made me a sound man, as thou canst see. It was great medicine."

"It was great medicine," murmured the Old Chief, critically fingering the reunited bone. The eyes of the Head Wife snapped; seldom did a

broken leg come so straight as this, but she would admit nothing. Pŭl Yūn was speaking.

"That was once, but she has saved my life three times since in battle. I say it. Do not ask how to-night. Yes, this is a bearskin, the pelt of a very great man-bear,—a cave grizzly. I have never seen a greater, but I have seen but few. Possibly my Chief, who has seen and handled several bears, has seen a greater man-bear than this?"

The Old Chief watched the unrolling of the huge skin and shook his head; no, he had never seen one as wide or so long: it was immense; a winter coat, too; it was the finest skin he had ever handled.

"I did not kill this bear," said his grandson after a dramatic pause.

It was at this juncture that the challenge from without brought these explanations temporarily to a close, and when the men re-entered the tee-pee both felt that they had more momentous matter in hand than the relative positions of the ladies.

Said the Old Chief, "Thou art in for it now. I would have warned thee hadst thou not spoken so fast. My nephew has a bad heart. While thou

wast absent he has been sucking away from me the hearts of my young men. Some he has beaten, and some he has bought, and some he has talked over. But I have kept the place warm for thee. I still dreamed of thy homecoming. Never camest thou to me in sleep as thou wouldst have come hadst thou been dead. But this challenge, and thy taking of it up, is a heavy matter. Honk-Ah has come on in his spear-throwing. And he has great store of excellent weapons, well-handled, well-headed, well-balanced. And where are thine? Thou hast come home empty-handed. It is not well. But, since thou hast spoken, I see no way out of a retrial."

"Nor I, Chief," said Pŭl Yūn, making low and dutiful obeisance, for the old man's grave, slow, tones failed to hide a heart shaken by the presence of long-expected and now imminent calamity; his grandson would show courage enough for both; "Nor would I put it off for a day. Leave my wife and me to look over our weapons. All will go as thou wouldst wish."

And to this the Old Chief listened with a grunt, a somewhat weak grunt, as his grandson thought. The Head Wife was harder to satisfy, a matter

which Pŭl Yūn must take upon himself, as he presently discovered, for her husband sat mute, letting her nag and question whilst Dêh-Yān worked in silence and with despatch. What had come to the Old Chief? He had not been wont to be so acquiescent. His grandson turned it over in his mind, nor found any solution, being unacquainted with the premonitory symptoms of age, the indisposition to take a strong line because inward warnings forbid its being followed up effectively. There were few old men among the Sun-Folk. The whole generation between the Old Chief and the youth of the tribe had perished in a disastrous fight with their southern neighbours some years before, a blow which had necessitated a prompt removal from the disputed hunting-grounds and the stone-quarry, the object of the battle. It was there that the fathers of Pŭl Yūn and his cousin had fallen. The Sun-Men, in fact, had been a dwindling clan for nearly two generations, always liable to be cut off from their supplies of two necessities, weapon-stone and wives, neither of which could they obtain save at undue risks. Now with savages to dwindle is the precursory process of death. The braves knew this and were restless.

So, during the hard weather of the past winter, the feeling among the young warriors of the tribe had been gathering to a head that a younger and more active Chief was needed. There is small reverence for age among the lowest savages. The Eskimos, nearest of existing races to the Old-Stone men of whom we are speaking, give little deference to the grey head and the weak hand. Here, among the Sun-Men, the process of supersession was beginning—the new leaf was pushing off the old.

"It seems to me," murmured Dêh-Yān to her husband, "it seems to me that on this side of the ranges also the young bulls are making ready to drive an old tusker from the herd." Pŭl Yūn grunted, testing the point of an arrow with his thumb.

But, although he had said nothing, Pŭl Yūn's eyes and mind were at work, and the impression of instability, of a new spirit among his people since he had last been with them, and of impending and far-reaching changes lay down with him and arose with him next morning; and was promptly confirmed; for his rival and his rival's backers had been up and out betimes, the lists were al-

ready set and the marks fixed, a matter which was the business of the Chief alone.

The Old Chief saw what had been done and nodded acquiescence. It might be that the sceptre was passing from him. He would have one more fight for it, but the fight should be upon ground of his own choosing. He was too great-minded to quibble over trifles, and in truth the lists were well-set and the marks as truly and fairly fixed as he could have desired.

None disputed his position as referee.

The contest would be quite the most solemn and momentous, as well as the greatest sporting event that had occurred within the memories of the tribe. Honk-Ah, who had been runner-up for the war-chieftainship for two years past, as the Old Chief had said had come on in his spear-throwing during the winter, and was believed to have overcast his cousin's best records. If he should succeed to-day it was possible that he would kill two birds with one stone—make a sudden snatch at the head-chieftaincy of the tribe, and that his backing of young braves might support him.

If this occurred, if it came to blows, how would the matter go? The Old Chief asked himself the

question, but got no answer. Of one thing only he was assured, winning or losing he would die a Chief.

The mark was a badger-skin kaross fixed upon a wicker fish-trap and set upon a stake as high as a man. The distance was extreme, as Pŭl Yūn saw at a glance. Forty-five strides is a big, a very big throw with an assegai, if the mark is to be hit and penetrated. As a mere cast, an exhibition of distance-throwing, a man might do more. But this was no fancy-work: by the terms of the wager the mark was to be not merely hit but pierced. A badger's pelt is long in the hair; the skin is of the thickest and toughest of forest trophies. Pŭl Yūn nodded.

"My cousin has set himself a difficult mark: it is small and it is not easy to pierce. My cousin has plainly improved in his spear-practice since I have been away. Let him begin the play."

The man addressed, Honk-Ah, a lithe, tall brave, naked except for his breech-clout, arose from his heels carrying three spears.

"Shall it be a matter of three spears at this range?" he asked.

"Three will be sufficient," replied Pŭl Yūn,

"and he whose points go farthest through the peltry shall be adjudged winner."

"I am judge," grunted the Old Chief.

"Without doubt, my father!" assented Pŭl Yūn. Honk-Ah said nothing; he was balancing a spear as he walked to the throwing crease.

Five paces he passed beyond it, turned upon his heel, paused, measured his distance with his eye from old habit, arose upon his toes, pranced up to his crease with hand and arm at their utmost stretch, shook and flung his assegai.

All eyes followed the weapon; its grey chert head travelled steady as a stone, its five feet of shaft rotating as it flew in such wise that its extremity traversed a small circle. This was how a spear should be thrown, perfect form; how about the aim? The weapon completed its curve, pitched, struck, but did not satisfy the demands of the competition so completely as the thrower's friends could have wished: the direction was better than good, but the elevation was ever so little too high: the weapon had struck the upper edge of the mark, the shaft swung over and drew the point. The spear lay upon the ground beyond its head towards the thrower, still it was a great

throw. As every watcher knew, had the mark been a man that man would have taken a nasty wound.

The thrower, you may be sure, had followed the flight of his assegai no less critically. Without once taking his eye from the mark he took and weighed in hand the spear which he was to throw next, stepped lightly back, took distance, shook, ran, and threw. Nor was he below himself. This was better, as good as to direction, and as to elevation somewhat lower than the former. The head penetrated the lower edge of the skin and held, albeit the shaft drooped; thus much only it lacked of perfection, yet, there was not another man in the silent circle of spectators who could have done as well. The third and last was a truly fine performance: a centre, well driven home, it would have been impossible to better it. The spearman, his hands hanging by his sides, surveyed his work frowning slightly, as an expert does who has done well, but whose ambition was to have done better than well; then he slowly raised his chin, folded his arms across his chest and turned to his cousin with the superb and natural scorn of the savage who has no tradition of restraint behind him.

"Is that Honk-Ah's best?" asked Pŭl Yūn quietly, without rising from his heels. "Let my cousin take his time, the day is still young. Try three more throws, and again three more; it may be that two of thy spears balanced ill, or thy arm was yet stiff from being lain upon. What?—thou satisfied? Wilt stand by these, nor ask for more, however the matter goes?"

He ceased at a touch of the Old Chief's hand, and none too soon. Honk-Ah, a passionate and hasty fellow, was shaking with anger; he detested his cousin with a bitterness which surprised even himself. He had hated him when he thought him dead, and now that he had returned from the underworld, as it seemed, to snatch the prize from his grasp, his aversion went near to choking him. Whether Pŭl Yūn spoke or was silent, sat or stood, he hated him; his least movement, or the absence of movement fed the hate which had been smouldering within him for a year, which had glowed in his bosom all night, and now had all but burst into flame.

It was a full-blown flower of primitive jealousy. The Old Chief recognised the growth and inwardly shivered; things might go ill yet. Let there

be no talk, let Pŭl Yūn betake himself to his weapons.

"If it must be, it must be," remarked Pŭl Yūn without enthusiasm. "But, look you, my brothers and friends, I am but a night and a day from the snows of the pass; three (or was it not four?) days and as many nights did I sit in a snow-cave waiting for the fall to stop. I have travelled through drifts as deep as my chin, and this upon the top of a broken leg. Yes, I lay for nigh two moons in a cave with a broken leg. Hence Pŭl Yūn, who was approved your War-Chief two years ago, is not at his best this day. He has forgot his spear-throwing somewhat. It is four, nay, it is six moons since he threw a spear."

A shiver of astonishment ran around the circle, for this was giving the contest away before it was begun. Spear-throwing is an art which calls for constant and unremitting practice: the assegai-thrower no more than the violinist can lay aside his instrument for weeks and months at a time and resume it at will with his old facility. The listening tribesmen covered their mouths with their hands and smiled behind them; each man's eyes rolled on his fellows' seeking and finding compre-

hension. The thing was as good as settled. But Pŭl Yūn had arisen to his feet and was still speaking.

"I have brought back to camp no spears of our sort, for my arm is very fat and weak, much weaker than the arm of my wife here, (who will throw presently)." A laugh broke out, but fell, for he was grave and was still speaking. He had none of the marks of a madman about him; he was just the Pŭl Yūn whom they had all known and loved, gentle of speech exceedingly,—yet his words, or some of them, were strange—ludicrous.

"So I have made for myself little assegais, boys' assegais"; whilst speaking he drew one from the long skin pouch which hung at his back and handed it to the Old Chief, who turned it end for end in his hand, and looked it over very critically, and passed it on to the elder nearest to him with an impassive face but a very shaken heart. The absurd little thing went slowly around the circle. None above the age of an uninitiated boy had ever handled its like. It reached Honk-Ah who disdained to touch it, smiling insolently, his game already won.

"Yet, it seems I must do what I can," said Pŭl

Yūn, sighing again, "and if, by good luck, I can make these little-boys' spears fly straighter and stick deeper than my cousin's, what will ye say?"

Said the grey Chief, "My son's son, whilst thou hast been away we have had omens of change and of trouble. Our enemies, the White-Wolves and the men of the Lynx totem have begun to encroach yet more upon our hunting-grounds, they have taken game from our traps, they waylay and wound our young men hunting singly. We have given up lone hunting, we hunt in couples or three-somes. They, or we must move on. But it needs fighting to clear the matter. And—and—I am grown better at council than at the chase. Strong am I still, but I stiffen, and am slower of foot than my wont. The Sun-Men have always had a War-Chief who could lead them. The tribe, —the young men, are asking for one. Thy cousin claims the post. What can I say to thy question?"

To Pŭl Yūn's thinking there was more than physical weakness in this appeal. He faced the old man silently but with a steady confidence in his eye which went some way to restore the senior's shaken courage, who took fresh breath and went on.

"The spear, my son, is the only weapon, and the farther it is cast and the deeper it is driven the better the warrior. Yonder is the mark. Get thee to thy spears. I have spoken."

The little dart was still travelling its round, exciting amazement, amusement, and curiosity as it went. It returned to Pŭl Yūn; he examined its point and feather (the absurd little feather, fingered by so many, understood by him alone), all with an exasperating deliberation and gentle cheerfulness as of a man regaining his spirits. The tent-folds behind him shook and forth came the foreign woman, his wife, Dêh-Yān, as he had been heard to address her, bringing in hand—what?—surely not more spears, for there were others in the skin pouch upon his back, yet she bore to him a staff, stouter, heavier, and longer than any assegai, and, whereas a well-made assegai is thickest three hands' breadth behind the head and thence tapers both ways, this clumsy shaft was thickest in the middle. An impossible, headless weapon thought the tribe, craning to see.

Pŭl Yūn took the staff, tossed and caught it, shook it a little whilst the Little Moon woman unwound a stout cord of twisted sinew looped at

either end. Watched intently by the tribe the man threaded both loops upon the staff, fitted the last to a notch at one end of it, which end he turned under and set his left foot upon; then, holding the staff erect and close to his left side he, gripping its upper end with his right hand, swiftly and strongly bent it over his knee and hip whilst with his left hand sliding the second loop to its resting-place in the second notch which was now close beside his chin.

'T was done in a moment, and the thing stood confessed no weapon at all, but just a drilling-bow, an out-sized, clumsy tool. Honk-Ah led the laugh.

But Pŭl Yūn, unmoved and passively grave, was emptying at his feet the skin pouch aforesaid, and lo, there lay more boys' assegais, weak, light, and decked with feathers where no feathers should be. The laughter did not cease when the man chose three and approached the scratch thus armed, for the bow-drill which he carried his critics regarded as a mere encumbrance, a thing as foreign to the business in hand as a fishing-line. Taking his stand upon the crease itself, and making no preparation for the usual run before throwing, the

young chief gripped the bent bow-drill left-handedly by its midmost stoutest part, laid a dart across the wood, and his left forefinger over that dart; then, fitting a hitherto unnoticed notch in the end of that dart to the string, he gripped both dart and sinew, and drew both away from the bending wood whilst raising the whole apparatus with his extended left hand. Back and back went his right hand, stiffly and more stiffly extended his left arm, until the chert head of the dart stuck out beyond the left thumb whilst the notched and feathered tail, still fast against the sinew-cord, was level with the man's ear. Thus he stood, poised, tense, and silent for a breath; the last cackle of derisive laughter died; what did all this mean? *Twang*—something hummed like the wings of the great fawn-coloured mountain-swift when he sweeps a beetle from a grass-blade close to one's knee and is a hundred strides away before one knows what he has done. Pŭl Yūn was standing exactly as he had stood before the sound, save that the string had escaped from his hand and the bow-drill had gone straight again. What had become of the dart? 'T was gone, yet none had seen it go. At such close range, and from such a powerful

bow, an arrow travels nearly level and exceedingly fast. The eyes of the tribe, fixed upon the man, and awaiting the vehement action of the spear-thrower, had failed altogether to pursue the flight of the missile.

"Wah! when is he going to throw?" "Where has it gone?" "When did he cast?" "*How came it there?*" for lo, in the target beside the best spear of Honk-Ah stood the dart of Pŭl Yūn, quite as well-centred and more deeply fixed.

A buzz of subdued clamour arose and was instantly hushed, for the marksman's second dart was in his hand, and again that queer, clumsy domestic implement, hitherto reserved for the girl who made fire, or the eye of a needle, was bending again. *Twang!*—again that new, keen sound and all eyes jumped, and again failed to follow that unnaturally low, swift flight. They looked above it, looked where a spear would have been, and whilst they stared—*thuck!*—a second dart was standing in the target, not a hand's breadth away from the first, and as deeply imbedded.

Honk-Ah crammed his mouth full of his own fingers and bit them, but no one spoke. All

edged a step nearer, and when the string hummed for the third time, and the final dart, driven straight and hard, stood between the other two, there was a deep gasp of half incredulous surprise.

Savages are deeply and religiously conservative, and easily persuade themselves that their own way, though demonstrably the worse, is the right way. Did the landowners of England effusively fold Stephenson to their noble bosoms? His trains would interfere with their fox-hunting: so much they could see. Later they saw money in the thing and came into it with a rush.

Now the Sun-Men were almost as conservative as the House of Peers in the day when the rocket was the last new thing; and there was nothing of lucre with which to commend this invention to their unwilling admiration.

Alack, our race has moved with a pitiful slowness, and still moves locally and by jerks, and with such intermediate marking of time and retrogressions elsewhere.

Hence it is not to be supposed that the Sun-Men acclaimed the first performances of the New Thing with shouts of joy. To the braves of the tribe it signified the success of a piece of woman's

gear. Their first impulse was to have none of it, to shout it down as foreign magic, certainly novel, probably impious, and no doubt offensive to their deity. Even the Old Chief, with all to gain by his grandson's victory, was unenthusiastic.

Were they more stupid than their descendants of a later day? I trow not. Let the reader judge. Once during England's struggle with Napoleon was the chance offered to each antagonist to end the matter at a stroke. How did they take it? Joseph Manton laid his designs for rifled artillery before the Master of the Ordnance and was refused leave to manufacture guns capable of demolishing the ships, forts, and forces of France at long range. A few years later young Fulton explained to Bonaparte his plans for towing the wind-bound Boulogne fleet across the channel by steam. The hard, shallow grey eyes of the Corsican stared him down, "*Idéaliste!*" and England was safe for another century.

Pŭl Yūn had won, but the successful competitor's three astonishing shots aroused suspicion in some, anger and jealousy in others. There were men present capable of surlily or passionately repudiating the fact. Honk-Ah did. He arose

from his heels, flung out his hands, strutted, laughed derisively, indulged in gestures offensive and provocative, and walked towards the target.

"Stop!" cried the Old Chief, "let no man draw those spears."

Himself detaching the skin, he bore it around the circle of watching braves. There was no denying the evidence. Those three, small, bow-driven darts were in over their heads. A man so struck would hardly have lived out the day.

Pŭl Yūn, without vaunts, took the fact of his victory for granted, and, noting his backer's reserve, came to the front.

"I have just one little thing to ask," said he, raising his hand, "a very little thing. It is that my cousin will now throw spears with my wife."

The listening tribe stared with open-mouthed amazement. The challenged man fairly bristled. To a brave such a proposal was an indelible insult. Yet Pŭl Yūn's manner was not insulting; nothing could be less provocative than the gentle, unsmiling simplicity of his mien.

"A brave plays only with braves," said the Old Chief, interpreting the challenged man's rigid silence.

Then, at a nod from her husband, Dêh-Yān came from the curtained doorway of the wigwam. She was wearing the full spring-months' working dress of a woman of the tribe, to wit, her own supple beauty hidden only from the waist to the knee by an apron of skins.

There was nothing to remark in this, but what drew a murmur of amazement from the circle, a murmur which presently turned to scoffs and incredulous laughter, was the bearskin which she bore upon her arm, and the collar of teeth and claws which encircled the ruddy symmetry of her throat. Sedately she spread the skin and took her stand upon it. She knew, none better, that this hour would be the making or the breaking of her man and herself, but she bore herself superbly. If her heart fluttered within her breast her mouth was hard and her eye steady. Silently she fingered the necklace and looked a question to her husband, who raised his hand.

"Do you ask why my wife stands upon that bearskin whilst I stand upon bare earth? Do you ask why she, and not I, wears that necklace? Those are fair questions which I will answer presently. But, first, I too have a question to ask of you.

"If two go to the woods to hunt and a bear is killed by one of the two, who shall wear the spoils —he who did the killing or he who looked on?

"That is our case, my wife's and mine. Whilst I lay with a broken leg-bone, that bear came like a lynx upon a wood-hen in a gin and thought to have made a meal of me. My wife was there; she might have run for it, but she took spear in hand and killed that bear,"—he stooped and lifted one of the enormous paws of the hide. "At one thrust she killed that bear. He was very near to me, nearer than my cousin is now; he was upreared for the stroke; he was not a young bear, nor a brown bear, but a grizzly of the rocks; an old man grizzly, so my Chief says who knows more of bear than any of us; for myself I have never had much to do with bear of any sort, two, perchance, brown bears both—they fought well—did not they, Honk-Ah? But this was my first grizzly (he came near to being my last). We were in a cave, the three of us. I was sitting, with my leg stiff and weak, so—" he was now upon the ground at Dêh-Yān's feet, acting the scene. "The grizzly came thus—" he bounded from the earth, crawled, reared, pawed the air, impersonating the monster.

"She—she here, my wife,—who was not attacked, who might have saved herself,—what did she?—*What did she?—I ask!*" his voice rose to a shout. "What would *my cousin have done?*" It fell to a soft, penetrating tone, he spread his hands and bent towards Honk-Ah as though genuinely seeking an answer to his question, a question put with an air of suave simplicity which it was impossible to effectively resent. "My cousin would have done what my wife did, yes, he would have killed that grizzly, I see it in his eye!—Thou wouldst have done just that, Honk-Ah!"

A stifled titter ran around the circle, for this was a home thrust. Honk-Ah had indeed, as Pŭl Yūn had reminded him, been present at the hunting of one of the two bears which had been slain by the Sun-Men during the past four years, but, by over-caution, or maladroitness, or sheer ill-luck, it had not fallen to him to distinguish himself in that fight. All braves cannot be at their best upon all occasions, and that had not been one of Honk-Ah's days. The emergency which had found his cousin wanting had been one which had set the seal to Pŭl Yūn's courage and address. Rivals before, the cousins had been rivals since,

Pŭl Yūn leading. The elders present perceived that their young War-Chief, not content with re-establishing his precedence, was bent upon inflicting a public humiliation upon his would-be supplanter; perceived, too, that he was probably aware of the plot which his timely return to his tribe had barely forestalled, and were wondering how the Honk-Ah party were taking it.

These, as it happed, were taking the matter extremely well. They had fallen under the influence of Honk-Ah not for any love which they bore him, but because a leader of some sort was needful for the tribe at a critical juncture, and he, in default of Pŭl Yūn, was the only possible man. Their former War-Chief had dropped upon them from the skies, and albeit they had wavered in their allegiance, and some of them had talked big overnight, with the instability of the savage (who, like a boy, is merely a man in the making, fickle and easily moved to good or evil), they were ready to return to duty. The result of the spear-throwing had shaken them, but this exhibition of Pŭl Yūn's adroit eloquence had completed their reconversion, not to the new weapon but to the old comrade.

Honk-Ah was upon his feet; he had heard the titter of the women behind him, he had looked towards one and another of his chosen friends and followers but had failed in finding an answering eye, he felt himself slipping; the situation called for instant action, he took it with a rush—there was no finesse about Honk-Ah. He struck his hardest at his opponent's weakest spot,—this tale was too wonderful for belief. He appealed to the experience of the Old Chief and the half-dozen elders; he claimed as a brave to know something, he and his contemporaries had seen a bear or two die, but they had died hard, had charged home a dozen times; had run, when it came to running, for a long way; had stood at bay under a storm of spears for half a day; it had taken every man of the hunting party all that he knew to finish the fight with a whole skin. Yet, this foreign woman, forsooth, had killed her bear, an old man grizzly (there was no getting over that skin), with a casual poke with one—*one*—of her people's stupid little darts. Absurd! That the bear had died was evident—even bears cannot live for ever: but how had he died?—In a pit? or under a downfall? or by a chance-fallen rock, perhaps?—Such

things did happen to bears as to men, he supposed. And doubtless this had befallen whilst Pŭl Yūn lay sick, and—well—it was only too plain that his cousin had been very sick indeed, both in his feet and in his head, for, in a word, this foreign woman had fooled him."

Pŭl Yūn heard him to an end with grave patience, then turning to Dêh-Yān, who was now quivering with hard-pent excitement, he nodded. The girl retired to the wigwam and was presently back again, no longer wearing the bear's trophies, but re-arrayed in a triple necklace of human teeth which encircled her brown throat in shining rows, whilst three scalps swung and dangled from her waistband.

A low cry of utter wonder broke from the circle of spectators, and rose louder as, in obedience to her husband's eye, she made the circuit of the ring, exhibiting with a sort of shy bravado to the astonished braves these undreamed-of wonders. Scalps?—these were not the scalps of old men or of women, but of topknotted braves. The teeth, too, were not milk-teeth, but the unworn, fully fanged grinders of men. She returned to her place upon the bearskin pursued by admiring

glances. All kept silence; not even Honk-Ah had any remarks to offer, or explanations to suggest. Pŭl Yūn arose again.

"My cousin is hard to satisfy. A brave who has killed his bear in single fight is still unworthy to meet my cousin. I ask my Chief, I ask myself and you—nay, I will ask my cousin—Who is worthy to meet so great a warrior as Honk-Ah?

"And, here is my answer!" He turned to his wife. "Behold my squaw—Dêh-Yān is her name; she is wearing the scalps of three braves; they were strong braves and great runners, a winter war-party (Gow-Loo, Pongu, and Low-Mah were their names). They were well-armed, behold their axes and knives! They ambushed my wife, set upon her as she bent over a trap; so much did I see of the fight with these eyes, looking from the cave where I lay foot-fast. Did she fly screaming to me?—No, she thought for me; she led them away from our cave, a long chase, oh, a hard chase! one whole day. But this I cannot speak of particularly for I did not see it. Late that night she returned to me with these scalps. They were fresh then, new-stript. Does my cousin, who speaks of downfalls and pits, think that my

squaw took all three braves in a pit at one running? In a *hopo*, say, like a herd of horses? Does he think in his heart that these young warriors gave their hair and their teeth to a girl for love?" The speaker laughed merrily at the idea, and, save Honk-Ah, every one within hearing laughed with him; he stilled the merriment with upraised hand and turned to his antagonist.

"Once again I ask him whether he will play at the spear-throwing with this brave, my squaw?"

The speaker paused for a reply, and in the silence which followed braves and women alike craned for a better view of the face of the man whom he challenged, who was squatting upon his heels glowering upon his rival, the fingers of his throwing-hand tightening, slackening, and again tightening around the shaft of his assegai.

An answer of some sort he must make, but, what answer would pass?

Whilst he debated, the foreign woman stooped, took her husband's bow from the ground, chose her a single dart, and approached the crease. She turned and scrutinised the mark, the creel now denuded of the badger's skin. The stake upon which it hung protruded through the wicker for

the length of half an arm. Watched by all she stood serenely at gaze, then threw up her chin and called to a woman at the other end of the lists.

"O woman, there!—thou with the papoose!—I want a mark. Wilt hang something small, say a moccasin, upon the top of that stake? I thank thee, sister!"

A gust of astonished laughter arose, what foolery, what bravado was this?—There hung a child's mitten, an impossible mark, such as no brave had ever set for himself or for his rival. Again arose the clear, mellow, woman's voice, using their own tongue with just a touch or two of foreignness in its intonations,—

"O my father and chief, may I throw at this mark?—I will throw but once."

The Old Chief turned first to Honk-Ah, but the man sat mute and glum as though the business were no concern of his. Then to the woman he turned and nodded assent: doubting as did the rest, Pŭl Yūn excepted.

Dêh-Yān fitted arrow to string and half bent the great bow, still keeping her eye upon the tiny mark, then with a small sweet laugh she tripped back from the throwing-crease five full strides, drew

swiftly and to the ear, and as swiftly loosed. *Twang!* the cord sang shrill in the morning air, the arrow sped, and a whoop of sheer delight broke from the watching tribe, for the shaft had struck the mitten full, had pierced and transfixed it. The archer had watched the flight of her shaft with a hard bright eye, now she turned and tripped back to her husband's side without a side-glance, as if such marksmanship was all in her day's work, a thing of nought. Doubt not that her little heart was high within her bosom, but no vaunting word escaped her lips. Dêh-Yān was great.

The Old Chief was upon his feet. Would his nephew throw? 'T was a fair challenge.

"On some other day—perhaps," muttered Honk-Ah, confusedly.

"To-day, and now, my cousin,—or not at all, and never!" retorted Pŭl Yūn. "And, bethink thee, it is not now for the War-Chieftaincy that thou art bidden to throw—that is lost to thee—but for its reversion. Wilt thou stand third in the tribe by out-throwing my wife?—No!—then thou art nought, just a brave among my braves, no more, whilst she leads the war-parties in my absence."

"That is so,—I say it," said the Old Chief, stilling the clamour that was arising among the braves. "Here stands my daughter, no foreign woman, but a full member of the tribe; no squaw but a brave, and a very great spearman."

"*Witch!*" screamed the cousin, bounding to his feet and whirling back his spear. In the twinkling of an eye he had quivered and had hurled it at the shapely bosom of Dêh-Yān. But the Grey Chief stepped before her with upraised hands and lips opening in rebuke that was never to be uttered. Straight betwixt those upraised hands sped the spear, and drove its keen chert head deep through the neck-cordage and into the great throat artery of the Father of the Tribe.

The bright life-blood spouted high and wide. The stricken man staggered, but kept his feet, composedly folded his arms, and stood awaiting his death.

A bitter cry of horror burst from the circle of braves, a shriller wail from the outer ring of women, and as the uproar grew the tall figure of the Ancient Leader was seen to totter, sway, and fall.

Pŭl Yūn had leaped to his feet, snatching right

and left for axe and knife in the blind impulse of wrath. Honk-Ah, horrorstruck at his impiety, stood for some breaths covering his wide open mouth with his hand, a petrifaction of remorse, whilst his friends fell away from him as from an infected thing; then, seeing his enemy and master, the New Chief, in whose hand lay his life and his limbs to torture at his will, bounding across the open circle towards him, he turned and fled with winged feet.

He had yet a chance, not only for life alone, but for far more than life, for the Chieftaincy of the Tribe! If he could reach covert and maintain himself alive for ten days and ten nights the Headship of the Sun-Men was his.

Such was the custom of the tribe. Such was the rule of succession of the Priests of Nemi (Kings of the Grove) down to the times of the Antonines; such, within living memory, was the law of the redskins of the Middle States.

The timber was near; with such a start and on so short a course escape seemed possible. Save those of the Head Wife, bent in agony upon the resolutely-composed face of her dying lord, the eyes of all were upon the runners, who had reached a

hundred strides from the lists and were nearing the edge of the scrub. The avenger of blood carried nought but an axe, he ran desperately, but haltingly, for his leg failed him; suddenly he stopped, threw, and missed! Honk-Ah drew away, and then,—all was momentary, whence came it?—What was happening?—it was over—a cry, "*Moon, help me!*" had shrilled,—a tense string had hummed behind the backs of the gazing crowd, a light fledged assegai had sped its curve over their heads, had dipped, and was sticking between the working shoulder-blades of the murderer. A throw prodigious and incredible. The stricken man ran staggering for a few paces, then his head went forward and he pitched upon his face, struggled to his knees, and strove to rise. But Pŭl Yūn was after him with the long-leaping strides of the master-wolf when he hurls himself at the flank of the sinking buck. He was upon him, a knife rose and fell, all was over. Why did he not take his scalp? For what was he waiting? To whom beckoning? Round wheeled the tribe to see more of the thrower of that amazing cast, and met Dêh-Yān, last night the foreign woman, and now the just-admitted brave, her black eyes burning, her white teeth

a-glitter in the glory of victory. Bow in hand she broke through the throng, her light limbs twinkled as she raced to her husband's side. Her bow she cast down, her knife was out, an avenging fury she knelt upon her fallen foe and tore away his scalp as the falcon strips the breast-bone of a partridge.

Her shriek of triumph ended in a peal of elvish laughter. Shall we blame her? No, nor praise. Why should we? Here stands a primitive human document. This was no product of nursery, high school, and drawing-room, nor was she an unsexed termagant of the slum, neither super-civilised nor residual. No, nor an abnormality, but something above a typical woman of the Old Stone Age, a fine specimen, if you will, of woman as we know her in the shaping, half-way up from the ridge-browed, spidery-armed, dog-toothed Forerunner, who, some hundred thousand years or so earlier, had dropped from her tree at the cry of her fallen piccaninny, and, greatly daring, had beaten off a hyæna with a club. There, indeed, stood the First Parent whom we need recognise, for, past gainsaying, the crucial moment was that which found us upon firm ground instead

of clinging to a branch, which saw us upon two feet instead of four, and with a tool in hand.

The difference betwixt that far-away, hirsute, anthropoid heroine who discovered the club, and her distant descendant who invented the bow, was great, but was chiefly physical. The lengthening of the lower limbs and the shortening of the upper, changes in the forms of the extremities, a progressive opening of the facial angle, and modifications in eye, ear, and spinal column had obliterated the ape and brought to the birth a stalwart savage, ingenious, artistic, and in many ways distinctively human without sensibly raising the moral standard. Yet another hundred thousand years, more or less, would have to elapse ere a Voice should cry, "*Love your enemies!*"

The Master-Girl had already once in her life gone as far in that direction as could be expected of her. There were no tribal or religious sanctions for sparing the life of a ruffian who had shed the blood of the Father of his People in a treacherous attempt upon the wife of his cousin.

Leaving the corpse to the care of whom it might concern, and her weapons to her husband, Dêh-Yān strode back to the lists swinging the dripping

scalp around her head, singing her chant of triumph transfigured, her six feet of supple bronze seeming to o'ertop the tallest brave of her tribe. They drew away from her cowering, deprecating her incantation and the magical potencies of her glance and hand; a priestess confessed.

Meanwhile the widowed Head Wife rent the air with her wailing. To her the victor addressed herself, a woman to a woman. The mourner had seen nothing, knew nothing, nor understood what had befallen, until, in answer to her passionate appeals for vengeance upon the slayer of her lord, the new-come foreign woman laid in her hands the wet scalp of the murderer.

The braves returning from stepping-out the full distance of that still only just credible cast, found the Head Wife of their dead chief grovelling at the feet of the New Leader.

"Dêh-Yān," said her husband tremulously, himself half afraid of this prodigy to whom he found himself mated, "will it please thee to draw thy shaft? They—we—do not seem to like to lay hand to it. It is still fast in his heart. Its head was small enough to pass between his back-ribs. Thou wilt remember the arrow,—the last of thy making."

"The white ptarmigan's feather? Yes, I prayed to my Totem for its luck when I made it; and again as I loosed. What are they saying?"

"They are hailing thee Chieftainess,—yes, and I, too, hail thee!" He came near, very near to prostrating himself, but something in her eye, some movement of her lip deprecated, forbade.

From that hour the Master-Girl's influence grew and deepened.

That shot converted the braves of the Sun Totem from spear-throwers to bowmen. In time, and, as it seemed, but just in time, an archer-force, equipped and trained by their Chieftainess, encountered the long-anticipated raid of the Lynx-Men. The rout of the invaders was signal and complete. Timely warning of their presence was given by the young good wolves which the Master-Girl had taught her people to domesticate; these warders of the dimness before the dawn held up the advance guard of the foe with bristling backs and shining teeth, until Dêh-Yān had set her battle in array. A born general, one of the first, she had silently thought out her strategy—piously attributing its inspiration and success to her Totem,

the horned moon, whose very form she imitated in the marshalling of her little force.

This naked woman-savage had evolved from her own clear brain the most consistently successful tactic of all subsequent warfare, that deceptive movement which consists in refusing battle by the attacked centre whilst delivering counterstrokes from the converging flanks.

"The Lynx-Men are very stout-hearted," she said. "They have carried matters their own way for many years you tell me.—It is well, O Pŭl Yūn, for I would have them charge us as an old boar charges, without thought of turning or looking left or right." She laughed low in her throat, but her eye was hard and bright, her braves watched her as growing boys watch a man. "Now we have them," she said, as battle was joined; "remember, if one of them falls by a *spear* of ours I shall want to know whose spear it was that transgressed!"

A minute later and the Sun-Men's centre, a special force of spearmen, trained to practise the ruse, after wasting their assegais at idle range, were in full retreat upon the stockade—*and their bows!*—whilst ambuscaded archery was closing in

upon both flanks. The enemy, stubborn, haughty, and with an unbeaten record, saw nothing, knew nothing, until clambering one upon another at the stockade like bees that swarm, their backs felt the dreadfully-piercing small assegais of their despised foes, whilst the bowmen behind the stockade struck them down faster than they could climb.

They died there to a man; not one escaped. It was a war-party of Sun-Men disguised in Lynx trappings which took the news of the defeat to the Quarry-camp. This was the Master-Girl's counter-stroke; she led it,—as the song that was sung for many generations told,—led it in the weed of a captive woman, one of a crowd of women, and of braves decked out as women, who marched with dishevelled hair and downcast heads and with hoppled hands!—but with their bows borne for them by their (supposed) captors, ready at need. The surprise was absolute and final. The Lynx Totem was blotted out; only the young, unproved girls and the smallest of the toddling boys were reserved to be incorporated in the Sun-and-Moon Clan, the first of many similar acts of adoption.

CHAPTER XI

THE PASSING OF THE MASTER-GIRL

AND of the rest of the deeds of the Master-Girl, and of her extreme wisdom, foresight, and daring, what shall I say?—Time would fail me to tell of her dealings with the White Wolves and the Beaver Totem, the Elks and the Red Clouds, and twenty tribes more, yea, and how she, moved thereto by memories of early humiliations, crossed the ranges in force and wiped out her old people the Little Moons; as to which grim deed I desire to express no opinion. Human nature, even nowadays, is queer, nor was it less queer in the Days of Ignorance. Let us admit that a warfare begun in self-defence was carried on for conquest. Her new weapon, her generalship carried all before her, and in her day the Sun-and-Moon Totem waxed great, throve and multiplied, became a dominant clan, pushing back the hunting and war parties of all other names for a month's journey

and more. Nor was it a brief episode, for this woman, the great Chieftainess, as men called her during her life, and for long after, ruled her tribe for so many seasons that if a man were asked to tell how long, that man must hold up his two full hands six times, and yet shew three fingers beyond ("Three *whole men* and three *toes*" by Eskimo count). So many times did the Black Cock go a-lekking during the reign of the Master-Girl.

In her day every man of her tribe had not less than two wives. Yea, even her husband; for, being childless herself, she, loving her Pŭl Yūn with an exacting and jealous love, was minded to see him with a larger family of young braves and girls to his name than any other man of the Totem, and to this end supplied him with wives whom she picked and trained,—conjugal arrangements distressing to us moderns, but still existing among the Primitives of the Aurès Mountains in Southern Algeria, and which in the case of Pŭl Yūn and Dêh-Yān in no wise lessened the reverence which the husband paid to the wife of his youth, nor the more exacting and jealous love with which she returned his affection.

Moreover, did she not arm and train an especial force of women archers?—women who hunted by moonlight? These and the good wolves of their training were the camp-guard, both of the home stockade at the Quarries, whither the tribe removed, and of the flying camps in war-time. Sorely dreaded were they by the foeman of other totems, as well for their close and accurate shooting as for their midnight raids, for the men of the Old Stone Age dreaded to go among dark woods for good and sufficient reasons, and having this fear engrained in their beings, had imagined and come to believe in a-many strange and dismal Things which haunted the Dark beside those upon which an axe could bite, which beliefs are held, or at least acted upon, by not a few of their descendants to this hour (albeit by daylight they will in no wise allow that they feel any nervousness at all, nor will admit that anything whatsoever exists to warrant it).

This amazon force was recruited from among the fleetest and hardiest of the unmarried girls. Admission to its ranks was jealously restricted and hedged about according to the manner of savages by secret and severe initiatory ceremonies

celebrated by virgin priestesses under the light of the New Moon in forest retreats, to which no man was ever admitted.

And to this, Pŭl Yūn, war-chief and arch-priest of the rival Sun-disc cult, was brought to consent, an admission of the moral ascendancy of the Master-Girl which will not be lost upon the discerning reader.

She would seem to have had a great time of it, but of her many campaigns (as of those of Kai Khosroo and of Genghis Khan and other conquerors whose exploits were too complete to be recorded) no faintest hollow whisper has come down to us. The chronicle of the First Woman Chief (what a wealth of richly-embroidered incident is lost to mankind!) was writ in that earliest cuneiform script, the arrow-head, upon that most perishable of material, the bodies of her foemen.

It may be surmised that the movements of the tribes whom her conquests dispossessed may account for some of the otherwise inexplicable migrations and settlements of peoples ignorant of the bow, the Australians to wit, or the still lower Tasmanians.

Proudly she lived, ruling her household vigorously and strictly, nor did her masterfulness decrease with advancing age.

And what of the end? what of the final scene which closes in and rounds off the longest and most eventful of lives?

To them it came suddenly. Pŭl Yūn, grey, hale, unbent, had grown somewhat silent, husbanding breath and powers which he had private reasons to suspect were failing, albeit no man of his body-guard had yet seen his doubt reflected in the silent side-glancing face of a fellow.

The summer heats were upon the land, a great drought, the tall and stalwart elder had overtaxed himself in the noon-day sun at a game-driving. When the evening meal was cooked, he did not eat. Dêh-Yān urged uselessly. All that night he was restless, dreaming, speaking in his sleep, but not of enemies, no, for this the keenly-solicitous wife, holding her breath, listened in vain. To whom might she lay this sickness?—a bewitching, obéah-work doubtless, but for ten days' march in any direction was there a man who dared think in his inmost heart evil of the

Great Chief? No, there was none in all that region that peeped or moved the wing.

Who in her household then? She brooded, vainly pondering. All the next day her man lay silent, refusing the various foods which she prepared with her own hands. At sunset she summoned the clan; her subject wives, their hand-maidens, daughters, and slaves sat around the silent hut; beyond the royal enclosure in a wider ring squatted the body-guard, his sons and grand-sons, and the staunchest of the braves of the tribe, grizzled ring-men upon whose scarred, brown chests shifted and glittered the trophies of forty battles. They squatted mute, hand over mouth, knowing well what was a-doing inside, jealous, remorseful, anxious; someone should die for this! —yes, to the fire with her, though she were the beauty of the tribe, or with him, if he were the best archer of them all!

Dêh-Yān came forth and perambulated the concourse, a V-shaped sprig of the witch-hazel in her hands; seven times she went through them and about them, but the twig turned to none. Rhab-domancy had failed her. Silently she had come, silently she went, still an-hungered for

vengeance, and still unsatisfied re-entered the dark hut.

"It is none of our people," she said, but there was no reply from the sick man. Her breath came short, she approached, touched, felt him. He was dead—dead of the broken heart which kills silently and swiftly so many gallant savages when stricken with one of the mysterious sicknesses for which they know no remedies and for which they cannot account.

Going forth she dismissed the assembly, bade the women of the Royal Household still their tongues and their children, and returning to the dark wigwam squatted all night beside her dead, revolving many things. Once her courage wavered and her faith in herself. "Husband! Chief! *Is this my doing?*"

But, for the main of her vigil the heart within the woman was insurgent. She had ruled too long without the physical or spiritual touch of restraint to brook an injury even from Death himself. Too proud to weep, and too self-contained to give vent to the passion of pent wrath which burnt her bosom, she crouched dumb and suffering whilst the constellations wheeled across

the black vault overhead, her whole nature yearning desperately for her lost mate—"*Give me back my man!*"

Just before the dawn-streak she must have slept, for a voice and a presence were in the hut, her husband's, but not as she had hoped to see and to hear him, with a clear doom-word as to whom she was to hold to account for his death; no, nor as she had known him these many years, a grey, massive, familiar figure. He returned to her smiling and bland, youthful, exquisitely beautiful and young, the happy bridegroom of her youth, who had been the first to hail her as Chieftainess of the tribe. She exclaimed with rapture, spread her arms for him, and—he was gone. She was alone with the corpse. "*He needs me!*" she said. "Wait for me, Pŭl Yūn. I will not be long!"

In one moment her resolve was taken. All her life had been a series of swiftly taken intuitive decisions; this was the last. The drowsing watchers without found her standing in the rift of the hanging skins before the doorway. "Wood," was her word. "Bring wood—much wood, let every man, woman, and child bring a fagot, dry

and fit. Your lord is a-cold and I am minded to warm him."

There was something terrible in the calmness and intensity of her face, although the words were wild enough, for what shall a man need with a stack of dry kindling at midsummer.

"This will surely be a very great and sore burning," muttered this one and that as they went their ways to the forest. Hardly dared man or woman look one upon another, so heavily lay upon all the dread of an accusation of witchcraft, of having commerced with the Unseen Powers of Darkness to the hurt of their Chief.

This is the canker of savage life, the haunting, still-impending secret terror that walketh in darkness, from which few uncivilised communities are long free.

Of this the Sun-and-Moon-Men had known little or nothing for the space of four generations. The dominant personality of the Master-Girl had brooked no interference from self-chosen mystery-mongers; sixty years of splendid health, unshaken by wound or accident, had afforded scant openings for the medicine-man. As High-Priestess of the Moon-rite she had been a law unto herself and to

her people, nor had her unbroken sequence of success in war provided occasions for witch-smellings or human sacrifices. Yet, as in the Southern Europe of our day the habit of delation has survived the Inquisition, so among the people of her tribe oral tradition of the dread ritual persisted, the rusted and long-disused machinery for exorcism and inquest for necromancy lay ready to hand, and might be put together and set a-working at any juncture should Authority but crook its little finger in signal. Yes, now was the time, and before night a score of their best warriors and handsomest women might be expiating the crime of "overlooking" the dying Chief.

Deep-rooted indeed must be this antique belief, since it died out in our England only within human memory (if it be truly dead) and still survives in the Celtic Fringe. The sensitive, impressionable, poetical Welshman is a thousand years nearer to his past than his fellow-subject of King Edward across Offa's Dyke. In broad daylight, nay, by gas- and candle-light, the man is as we, and in one or two of the arts is more than we; he professes, and truly believes, some evangelical creed,

and glances askance at the superstitious mummeries of the detested Establishment: but, let sickness, sorrow, or misfortune strike him, and, in the deep overhung country lanes, or by the hearth whilst mountain winds rumble in the stone chimney, he begins to doubt. The old faith, the doggerel charms, the scraps of nurse-lore, may there not be something in them after all? He can whisper his misgivings to his brother Celt in their native speech, it seems natural, possible, probable, but to a question put to him in the English he stiffens, or more probably puts on that impenetrable air of simplicity which has baffled the keenest seeker for folk-lore.

As for his cousin across St. George's Channel, is it yet ten years since a poor epileptic woman was held down and burned to death upon her own hearthstone by her husband, family, and neighbours with atrocious circumstances, and according to some immemorial rite which might have been lifted straight from Mashona-Land or the days of the Cave-Men?

Heavy of heart the wood-collectors departed upon their quests, heavy of heart, but light of heel. Woe to the laggard who hung back, to the woman

whose bundle was small, or who seemed to fear, and to avoid the eye of the Great Chieftainess. Before midday every fagot was ready. Where should the pile be built?—*where were the stakes?*

Dêh-Yān, hollow-eyed and of an ominous mien, paced the circle, took note of the burdens, then, whilst all throats grew tight and dry, and all breaths thickened, their ruler with regal wave of arm bade bear the wood to the inner stockade and pile it around the royal wigwam. There was a general movement to carry out her orders; this was no time for questioning. Whilst this black mood of their Chieftainess held, and whilst her mate lay silent within (sick?—possessed?—overlooked?—forespoken?—not *dead*, oh, surely not dead!), at such a juncture, with the air thick with doubt and suspicion, prompt, blind, implicit obedience was safest. What this last order meant who could guess? Many were guessing. What might come next, who dare surmise?—yet all were surmising.

Dêh-Yān had withdrawn within the wigwam: crouched there in the gloom she heard the crackle and snap of piled brush. The small place was dominated by the presence of mortality in disso-

lution. Her mind was divided, half with her dead, half turned jealously towards the workers without; she felt that they were listening—knew their minds and the workings of them, knew that hopes of respite were dawning, glancings forward, previsions of a possible sequel, other than the one which each feared. One event was coming home to them, the supersensitive faculties of the savage at full strain could get no tidings of the Chief who had withdrawn himself from his braves for two days. This absence, this silence spoke but one word—death!

Then, as she mused, something moved in the darkness behind her with the quiet, unbreathing, soft sinuosity of a snake. Turning swiftly she pounced and caught—a slim ankle! Her captive lay mute, panting thickly, shuddering strongly. Dêh-Yān without speaking ran an open hand over the features, followed out the limbs, and beside the relaxed hand lay something which she had not handled for many a year, reminiscent of her far-away youth, her own personal fire-sticks, long disused.

"This is little Fallow-Doe," she said softly and without anger, naming her dead lord's favourite

granddaughter, "but what does young Fallow-Doe here? unbidden in the place of death?"

"Oh, Mother," whimpered the girl, "I knew—I could not help it—I thought—Yes, I have eyes too—Thou art leaving us! Oh, do not forsake thy children!—What shall we do?—To whom shall we look? Yes, *He* there is dead,—we know, but how, we know not. All must die. Our times come. Maybe his time came. I do not think that any of the tribe bore a black heart towards him. But, O my Mother, if it is Obi (and thou knowest best), charge whom thou wilt. Charge *me!* I will die for him, though my heart is as white as a full moon; but, oh, do not leave us!"

The mourning widow withheld her answer, and when the word came, it was breathed softly and motherly: "Little girl, thy heart is white, I know it; but no whiter than the hearts of the rest. Get thee gone now by the way thou camest, and say nothing of thy coming hither until the third day at evening."

The child slipped eel-like under the tent-skirts and into the loosely piled fagots. Dêh-Yān patted the space left vacant and smiled, for the fire-sticks were gone too. She arose, gravely smil-

ing, and took from a skin wallet that hung high a pair of round stones, dense and very heavy, and struck them softly one against the other, and lo, the darkness was lightened with pale green sparks, for these were nodules of pyrites, her latest discovery, and one which would die with her to be rediscovered in later times. "You will not fail me, I think," she murmured, and began to arrange the tinder, crooning the first notes of her death-song to herself as she worked.

Wave after wave of memory flowed in upon her out of the long forgotten past, and with each some trait of her dead husband travelled towards her, towered, and subsided. Battle touches, his shield before her, himself exposed, his shout of triumph rang in her ears as her shaft went home. Or a hot, breath-catching moment in the life of a big-game huntress, a lioness with ears laid to her skull, and with head, neck, back, and tail in one level tawny line, broke covert and made for her snarling, and again it was Pŭl Yūn who had stridden between her and the wrinkled black lips. She saw him leap the fence of the enclosure and throw himself in the path of the stampeding herd of buck when the leaders of the driven mob

swerved in the very jaws of the *hopo* and were breaking back. What a man he had been!—yes, they had lived, they two!

And about the time that the heat of the day began to wane, the watching tribe heard her voice raised in song within the royal wigwam, and certain duller sounds as of soft stones pounded, and, whilst all strained eye and ear, fearing the approach of the unknown with hearts high in their throats, the afternoon sunshine was dimmed by a thin smoke, and above the ridge of the wigwam, where the poles crossed, the air grew glassy like troubled water. Then, whilst the dry sticks crackled, and here and there a green one spat, the pale flame that is invisible in the sunlight turned the wood grey and shrivelled the skin hangings. The death-chant pealed intermittently from within, interrupted by coughing, but ever resumed. Soon the whole pile was alight, and on every side the crowd, though pressed upon from outside, was driven back by the heat.

"And, oh, I *did* steal these—and I *did* pray her not to leave us!" wept Fallow-Doe.

Strong shudders shook the throng of watchers. Wild men, whose grandsires this woman (think—

a woman!) had brought to heel, whose fathers she had trained to the bow and schooled in her battle tactics, wept, actually wept!

For the Chieftainess whose death-song arose fitfully and faintly above the roar of the flame, had been more than a great warrior; the dead Chief had been that, a giant in fight, terrible at the axe, with a rush and a shout like the charge and the roar of a rutting stag. But, she!—how put it?—at once desperate and cautious, patient as a waiting heron, sudden in attack as the same bird when its uncoiled neck drives home the dagger-beak! Other leaders were pricked to hot decisions by the approach of unsuspected peril; she, for so long their pride and marvel, had planned her battle ere the tassels hung upon the hazel, and won it after the nuts were ripe—yea, and ever upon ground of her own choice. Did the Lynxes pounce at dawn, or the Sitting Bulls await her coming, 't was all one, the event fell as she had foretold. (Wail, ye women!) Other tribes swarmed disorderly to the onset and closed with clamour and confusion; she had taught her braves the true method of advancing silently and in line; she too had drilled them (at what pains and with what sternness!)

to a battle formation already described (subsequently reinvented by a later savage genius—Tchaka)—compelling her centre to mark time until her convergent horns had enveloped the headlong foe and the killing began to a general shout of "*O Moon!*" Each of her battles had been an antedated Cannæ. Tribe after tribe (names now to the young draft), scornful of woman-led warriors, had charged cheering into her traps and perished, for no quarter was given in the Stone Age, nor had the Master-Girl a use for a living enemy. Groan, ye men, nor spare your tears for once, though the children and women see that your cheeks are wet!

The groaning of the braves deepened, the keening of the women grew shrill, but from the core of the heat where the naked wigwam poles, stripped now of their gear, were blazing above the pyre like torches, came never a sound.

All through that afternoon the tribe watched and waited. The sun sank to her couch blood-red, and laying her broad face upon a hill-shoulder, forebore, as minded to see the last of her priest. The fire was burning itself out, but was still too hot to approach. A circular rampart of glistering

whiteness lay there with the air shuddering above it. Some of the ash retained the shape of bavin and fagot, more was flaky and formless as snow, but pulsing through it came rosy flushes from the glowing heart within. But, ah, in the centre space where the wigwam had stood, the Great Father and the Great Mother of their people, they who but two days since had stood for Authority, Strength, Courage, and Wisdom, were now white calcined bones!

It was then that a wonder and a portent appeared, for the tribe raising scorched faces from the dreary place of burning, beheld one half of the sky steeped as it were with blood, and the Sun, their Goddess, wading therein, whilst near to her, and within that ensanguined field, stood the first presence of the young Moon, a bow of palest green.

Then did the Eldest Son of the Dead arise, and with solemnly uplifted hands salute the Twin Totems. "Ye are there," he cried. "We hail ye both, Heavenly Watchers over your children!"

EPILOGUE

DARKNESS enwrapped him, comfortably soft, thick, and warm. He neither knew nor cared how long he had lain in it, nor if at any time he had ever known other conditions. He was just a motionless atom, or congeries of atoms, without ambitions, cares, or resentments, yet withal, a modicum of self-knowledge.

For instance, certain black marks outstanding from a dull luminosity over against him connoted definite ideas of origin and locality. IGHTHAM FISSURES—such were the marks, thick, heavy, distinct lettering in brownish black, output of a small hand-press used for printing museum labels. (Oh, it was all known to him, the oddness consisted in his knowing as much and no more, nor feeling any especial curiosity for information unexpressed by these symbols.)

Then, by gradual but sensible degrees, the intensity of the darkness yielded; and, as layer after layer was lifted from him, or washed off, he

recognised himself more fully. He was a Calcareous Accretion—(more black typing showed). He was being treated with weak acid baths. There were hopes entertained of the result. (He overheard someone say so.) He began to be interested in his own case; these accretions were little granular nodules found among the old dead earth of the clefts and fissures of the Ightham chalk; dead earth which had slipped down these rifts in the dead-and-gone long-ago when they were natural pitfalls in the surface of an Arctic tundra. In winter their dangers would have been hidden by the lips of drifted snow through which an unwary reindeer calf had fallen to its doom. (He remembered that reindeer calf, also the Arctic fox which was tempted down by the meat, and the lemming which was chased down by the stoat; and how neither fox, lemming, nor stoat ever got out again.) In summer insects fell in and died there.

His own case filled him with mild speculative hopes (the acid was fining him down, his chalky envelopes were leaving him, coat after coat.) Oh, there was something inside—a something which was probably interesting—possibly a New Fact!

(Here anticipation awoke in him.) Suppose, now, the chitinous core of him when washed clean and dissolved out should be recognisably *Bombus hyperboreus*, the big bumble bee of the Arctic, the one so rare in collections, the insect which seems almost immune to frost, and goes booming from one little frozen flower-bell to another during the brief Northern summer whilst snowflakes eddy around it! Such a find would be valuable, and new! Confirmatory as to climatic conditions, too.

"*M'yess!*" Someone was speaking above him, someone's finger pressed his wrist; he distinguished the ticking of a watch. He opened his eyes.

"*W–What is all this?*" and behold that underbred, uninteresting young doctor was looking down upon him with the subdued pride with which a medical man regards a case which will do him credit. (He had put a solid fortnight of holiday into it, for which, as he knew well, he could not legally recover a sou.)

The Professor (he was now the Professor again, and all the black marks, labels, and Ightham-fissure business were gone) found himself bursting

with a huge, novel experience, which it behooved him to get into writing if he died for it.

"P-pencil and paper—please."

And, eventually, he was allowed to have his way.

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